

The Lakewood Boys In The South Sea Islands



L. P. WYMAN

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Without the least warning, a dozen men seemed to rise from nowhere all about them.

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THE LAKEWOOD BOYS IN THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS

By L. P. WYMAN, Ph.D.
Dean of the Pennsylvania Military College,

AUTHOR OF

"The Lakewood Boys on the Lazy S," "The Lakewood Boys and the Lost Mine," "The Lakewood Boys and the Polo Ponies," "The Lakewood Boys in the Frozen North," "The Golden Boys Series," etc.



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The Lakewood Boys Series

**A SERIES OF STORIES FOR BOYS 12 TO 16
YEARS OF AGE**

By L. P. WYMAN, Ph.D.

Dean of the Pennsylvania Military College

The Lakewood Boys In the Frozen North

The Lakewood Boys On the Lazy S

The Lakewood Boys And the Lost Mine

The Lakewood Boys and the Polo Ponies

The Lakewood Boys In the South Sea Islands

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Made in "U. S. A."

THE LAKEWOOD BOYS IN THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS

CHAPTER I.

A SURPRISING PROPOSITION.

TAPS had sounded at the close of the sham battle and all the "dead" had sprung to life. The last note of the call officially brought to a close the work of the year at The Fortress and, together with the larger part of the corps of cadets, Bob and Jack Lakewood were hurrying toward the barracks in their eagerness to "get into cits" as soon as possible. But, just as Bob rushed into the wash room with Jack close at his heels, he felt a strong hand grasp him by the arm, and turning he looked into the face of a tall well built man whose lips were parted in a broad smile.

"Well, of all the——"

"Uncle Silas!" Jack interrupted with a shout as he threw his arms about the man's neck and treated him to a bear-like hug.

"Sa-save the pieces," the man gasped as he returned the caress with one arm while Bob pumped the other up and down.

"When did you get here?" he asked a moment later.

"About an hour later ago," his uncle told them.

"And I'll say you kids sure do know how to drill."

"Where you bound for?" Jack asked.

"Why, I suppose you're going home and I kind of thought I'd drift along with you. You see, it's been quite some time since I've been up in Maine."

"That's great," Bob declared. "You come up to the room while we get dressed and well be off in no time. Trunks went this morning. We'll get supper in Philly and catch the Bar Harbor express in New York. Father and mother'll be tickled to death to see you."

While he was talking, Bob was leading the way up stairs to their room and, a moment later, the two boys were stripping off their uniforms, while their uncle sat by the window asking them a steady stream of questions regarding their life there.

"Like it here, do you?" he finally asked, just as Bob was taking a final look around to see if he had forgotten anything.

"It's the greatest school in the world," he replied.

"Hum, well, I believe you," Mr. Lakewood smiled.

"I've always said that if military training of the right

sort wouldn't make a man of a boy nothing would, and you two sure are good advertisements for it." And he gazed with much pride at the well knit bodies of his nephews.

An hour later, the three were eating supper together in Philadelphia, and between bites, as Jack put it, were talking over old times.

"We'll show you some real woods up in Maine," Jack told his uncle while they were waiting for dessert. "And some real fishing too," he added.

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I won't have time for that, much as I would enjoy it," Mr. Lakewood smiled.

"Why not? You're going to spend the summer with us, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid not this time. If all goes well, I shall sail from New York a week from next Tuesday."

"Where to?" Bob asked disappointedly.

"For the South Sea Islands."

"Gee, do you mean it?" Jack asked.

"I sure do," his uncle smiled. "And I was just wondering if you could tell me where I could find two boys around nineteen years of age to go with me."

Bob looked first at Jack and then at his uncle and Jack, after nearly choking on a bit of bread, which, he afterward declared "had gone down the Sunday road," finally gasped: "D-did you say two boys?"

"Two boys. Yes, I said two boys. You see I want them for company and to help along certain lines. Do you know of any?"

"I don't suppose it would do to have them related to you," Bob grinned.

"Well, of course, we might run into a bit of danger down there, but I know the ropes pretty well, and if they weren't too closely related, why I don't know but it might do," Mr. Lakewood spoke slowly as though carefully considering the case.

"You think nephews would be too close?" Jack laughed.

"You—you mean you'd like to go, you and Bob?" Mr. Lakewood pretended to be greatly surprised.

"Oh, no, we wouldn't like to go, not a bit more than a bear would like to eat a pailful of honey," Jack again laughed.

"But I thought bears liked honey," Mr. Lakewood's face was perfectly sober as he spoke.

"It's the one thing in the world they like better than anything else," Bob told him.

"Then I am to understand that you might be induced to consider the proposition?"

"Would a wild cat consider a proposition to tackle a mink?" Jack countered, whereat they all laughed.

"Think your folks will let you go?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"Father'd let us go anywhere with you," Bob assured him.

"And so would Mother," Jack added. "But, come on, we've only got ten minutes to get the train in Broad Street.

As soon as they were seated in the Pullman and the train had pulled out of the station, Mr. Lakewood turned to the boys and said: "Now, I suppose you want to know what it's all about?"

"I reckon we are more than a bit curious," Bob confessed.

"And I don't blame you. In fact, I wouldn't give a hill of beans for a boy who wasn't curious. Well, it's a pretty long story but, seeing that we've got this compartment all to ourselves, I reckon now'll be as good a time as any to spin the yarn, as a sailor would say. This story begins back before you boys were born. I wasn't as old then as I am now and, believe me, I don't consider myself an old man now. Probably your father has told you that I've always been something of a rover and, as a matter of fact, I have. There aren't many countries that I've not been in one time or another. I always did have a longing to travel, and when I was about your age I quit school and started out to see the world. My first trip—but, there, I'll have to spin that one some other time and stick to the one I started out on.

"It was the twenty-fifth day of February of the

year 1899 that I started from New York on a five-masted schooner bound for Australia. You may think it strange that I can tell you the exact day, but it was my birthday and it was the winter after the big storm when the Portland went down off Cape Cod and everyone on board was lost. I was a pretty husky lad in those days and had the reputation of being about as capable a sailor as the next one. We had about the usual crew, a mixture of Sweeds, Half-Breeds and Yankees with an Irishman or two and a Scotsman thrown in for good measure. They were a pretty rough crowd, but no more so, I reckon, than the ordinary run of sailors. The old man, as we called the Captain, was a typical Down East Yankee from somewhere on Cape Cod. I remember he was a short stout man with an arm as big around as an ordinary man's leg, and hands almost as big as hams. He was a God-fearing man, and I never heard him cuss but once, and that was the time a big Sweed stepped on his pet corn, and then he let loose for about ten minutes; but he didn't use the Lord's name once but the devil sure did come in for his share of mention.

"Well, we had bad weather from the start, running into one storm after another, and one night, off Hatteras, I thought she was going down. But Cap'n Ezra sure knew how to manage a ship, and we pulled through. After that we had better weather and ev-

everything went along just lovely and we made excellent time down to the Horn. Then we ran into another storm and it was five days before we got around and into the Pacific.

"The Second Mate was a big Irishman by the name of Mike Mulligan and he seemed to take a fancy to me from the first and by the time we had rounded the Horn we were more than ordinary good friends. Mike was a real man, let me tell you. Six feet three he stood in his stockings and weighed 260 pounds and there wasn't a pound of fat on him. Strong? Why, man alive, I've seen him take a barrel of salt horse and put it on his shoulder as easily as I could a barrel of flour, and I used to be called more than middling strong.

"Well, once fairly around the Horn the wind, which for five days had been dead against us, changed and we bore away for Australia on a straight course. As if to make it up to us for blowing so long and so hard against us the wind held fair day after day and the blue waves slipped beneath our bow at a rate which bore us rapidly toward the big island. Already we had sighted several of the small islands on the outskirts of the South Sea group when, early one morning, the barometer began to fall rapidly. How well I remember that morning. Not a cloud showed in the sky and the wind, which had held fair and strong for so

long, had fallen to a light breeze which barely filled the sails. It didn't seem possible that a storm was brewing, but we knew that the barometer was more to be trusted than any outward signs. At eight o'clock the glass had registered thirty inches and two hours later it had fallen to 29.75. I knew the old man was worried when he gave orders to take in sail. In another half hour, a dirty bank of clouds was rising in the west, and by eleven o'clock the entire sky was overcast. The light breeze had entirely faded away, but the barometer had fallen to 29.60, and we knew it was only a question of minutes when the storm would strike, and the glass indicated that it would be a bad one.

"When the first whisper of the coming gale stole over the sea, the old man took the wheel and ordered one of the men to put the gilguy around him, so that there would be no danger of being swept overboard. Then it came with a suddenness I had never seen before or since. One moment we were lying lazily floating on a perfectly calm sea, and the next we were scuttling under bare poles over and through waves which looked like mountains. Now we were mounting up the side of an immense wall of water until it seemed almost as though the ship would stand on her tail, and then she would lift by the stern and dive, a mountain of sea coming over her bow, until it seemed that we were all bound for Davy Jones's

Locker. My, how that wind howled and shrieked. One by one the breaking waves carried away our life boats, until not one was left. There was absolutely nothing we could do save cling on to something and pray that we would outride it. It was dark as night, and it was hardly possible to see the length of the ship. Then came the rain. Not in sheets, as we say, but in a deluge. We hoped that the falling water would lessen the size of the waves but if it did, it was not noticeable, and for hour after hour we drove on expecting that every plunge would be our last.

"Then suddenly the end came. I remember the ship seemed to stand almost on her beam's end, as she rose to the top of a giant wave and she seemed to have hardly begun her dive when she struck with a shock which must have broken her clean in two. I had been clinging to the mast, well up in the bow, and, in some way, the shock threw me clean over the rail and I went down down until it seemed that my lungs would burst. All the time I was, of course, struggling to reach the surface and finally my head popped out above the water, but I was almost instantly nearly smothered in a whirlpool of salt spray as I was dashed forward at express train speed. But I had managed to fill my lungs with air, and held my breath as the undertow dragged me back and down a moment later. I never knew how many times this

was repeated, but at last I felt bottom beneath my feet, although I was unable to get a foot hold against that fearful back-wash. But the next time I was carried farther up, and managed, in some way, to hold against the drag, and to crawl up beyond the reach of the breakers. For a long time I must have lain there, too tired and sore even to move. But finally a beam of sunlight brought me back to the world and, opening my eyes, I saw that the storm had cleared and that the sun, almost directly over head, was peeping out through the clouds.

"Not a sign of the ship was to be seen, and my heart sank as I realized that, in all probability, I was the only one left alive of the crew. But, a moment later, glancing along the beach, I saw an object lying on the sand just at the water's edge, which brought me to my feet. I was so weak that I could hardly stand, but I managed to walk and creep until I was bending over the form of a man. He was lying face down, and when I had turned him over I saw that it was my friend, Mike Mulligan. At first I thought he was dead from a nasty cut over the right ear, but my ear over his heart caught a faint beat and I knew that he still lived. But it was over an hour before he opened his eyes, and not until several more had passed was he able to stand. But once on the mend, his wonderful constitution

made his recovery rapid, and by sundown he was much himself again.

"But we were both weak, and more than half sick from the salt water we had taken in, and, dragging ourselves up well beyond the reach of the tide, we slept on the sand through the night.

"The sleep and rest made new men of us, and, when we awoke at sunrise we were, physically at least, but little the worse for the terrible experience we had gone through, except for Mike's sore head.

" 'Faith an' I reckon we're all whot's left,' was his first word as he got to his feet and stretched himself.

" 'It looks that way,' I replied sadly.

"Naturally our next thought was about food, for we had not eaten for nearly twenty-four hours, and my throat was parched for lack of water. Inland the ground rose slightly and, perhaps a quarter of a mile away we could see a few trees growing in a clump.

" 'If they're cocoanut palms we won't starve to-day,' Mike said as we set off toward them.

"They were cocoanuts, as we had hoped, but there were only a half dozen of them and the nuts were few and far between on them. But we got about twenty, and ate one apiece, drinking the milk. It was not much of a breakfast, but a whole lot better than nothing. Then we cached the rest in a little pile at the foot of one of the trees and went on to

the top of the rise, which was only a few hundred feet away. From here we could see the whole island, which wasn't more than a mile long by about half that wide, and it looked to consist of nothing but sand, except that at the end toward the north it looked as though it might be rocky. Not another tree or shrub was visible and I'll never forget the look on Mike's face as he turned to me.

"'Si, I reckon we're in Dutch,' he said.

"Well, it sure did look that way. With no water, or, at least, little prospect of any, and only a matter of twenty cocoanuts between us and starvation the prospect wasn't what you'd call alluring. And there wasn't another island in sight. Nothing but blue water as far as we could see in every direction. Of course we could only guess at the distance we'd been driven in the storm, and we hadn't much idea of the direction, so we didn't know whether we were in the path of ships or not.

"'Well, let's amble over to the end there and see what's what,' I suggested, and we started off, walking slowly through the sand, for by this time the sun was well up in the sky and it was mighty hot.

"When we got to the end of the island, sure enough it was rocky all right. In fact we stood on a ledge of rock and looked straight down into what looked like deep water twenty feet or more below. But that was all. I had hoped that we would find

at least a spring of water hidden among the rocks, but there was none, not a drop, and already our tongues were hanging out of our mouths.

“‘Faith an’ we moight as well jump off and say here goes nothin’,’ I remember Mike said bitterly as he stood there gazing down. But I grabbed him by the arm and pulled him back, for I could see that he was in a bad way in his mind.

“‘Never say die while there’s life,’ I told him. ‘We’ve got enough nuts to keep us going for a few days, and no telling when we’ll sight a ship.’

“‘Sure an’ it’s nuts we’ll both be afore we see one,’ he groaned as we started back the way we had come, knowing that we must drink the contents of another cocoanut soon or go crazy. Will I ever forget that walk back? The last hundred feet or so I had to pick Mike up and carry him. You see, although normally possessed of great strength and almost unbounded endurance he had lost a lot of blood from the cut on his head, and I knew that he was mighty weak. Well, he was unconscious when I got him there and put him down in the shade of the thickest of the trees, but after I had opened one of the nuts and poured some of the milk down his throat, he opened his eyes and, for a little while, seemed to be regaining his strength. But I didn’t like the flush on his face, and it wasn’t long before I knew that the fever had him.”

For a moment their uncle paused, and the boys could see tears in his eyes, but he dashed them away with the back of his hand and went on.

"No use going over details. I did what I could do, which God knows was little enough, but he passed out two days later. I dug his grave with a flat stone scooping out the sand and resting when I had to. It wasn't very deep but it was the best I could and I buried him there, one of the best friends I ever had.

"I hadn't had much time to think of myself until it was all over and then I had slept for I never knew how many hours. But when I awoke, I found that there were but four of the nuts left. You see I'd had to get the milk for Mike and, in that hot sun, the meat of them didn't keep long after the nut was opened. From the position of the sun, I judged it must be about nine o'clock in the morning when I opened my eyes and, after I had taken stock of the number of nuts left, for a moment I really envied Mike in his last bed beneath the sand. Four cocoanuts between me and a lingering death from starvation. Can you wonder that I was pretty well down in the mouth?

"Well, I opened one of the nuts and drank the warm fluid and ate the meat. Then, for want of something better to do, I started off toward the rocky end of the island. I remember it was not quite so hot

as it had been most of the time, and, although I was feeling none too strong. I finally got there. It was low tide and, as I looked over the cliff, I gave a great shout of joy, for there, at the foot of the rocks, half out of the water, with her nose wedged in between two rocks, was a life boat. I saw at once that it was one of ours which had been carried away in the storm and I hurried to find a way down. I had to go some way to the right before I found a break in the cliff, but I finally got down, and, to my great joy, found that the boat was uninjured. Better still, the small sail with its mast was wedged beneath the seats, and the usual tin of hard tack and keg of water were there and unopened. The oars were also in their place. By this time, I was pretty sure that the island was out of the track of ships, and I resolved to set out at once. But first I could not resist drinking some of the water which, though warm, tasted better than I ever thought water could taste. There was about a gallon of it, and I knew that I must be very sparing of it and only drink when I had to. Well, I hurried back to get the three remaining nuts, munching a piece of the hard tack which I had taken from the tin. The discovery of the boat and its promise of escape had put new life in me, and it was but a short time before I was again making my way down the narrow pass carrying the three precious nuts in my hands.

"I had gotten about half way down when my eye caught sight of something which had escaped me before. It was a small opening in the wall of stone not more than eighteen inches wide and perhaps four feet high. At first I determined to pay no attention to it, for I knew that time was precious, but, on second thought, I told myself that it wouldn't take but a few minutes to investigate, and a few minutes more or less would probably make little difference. So I placed the nuts carefully on the pathway and, stooping, squeezing myself into the opening. Almost at once the passage widened out and, before I had gone a dozen steps I was able to walk upright. Of course it was pitch dark before I had gone ten feet and I had neither match nor flashlight. So I advanced very slowly testing every inch of the way before putting my foot down and keeping one hand against the wall. Although it was hot outside it was actually cold in there and the side of the wall was damp with cold moisture. More than once I was half minded to turn back, but each time curiosity got the better of my judgment and I went on.

"I guessed that I had gone from eighty to one hundred feet along the narrow passage when my hand came to a break in the wall, and, reaching out with my other hand, I found that the opposite wall also had come to an end. I turned to the right, still keeping my hand on the wall, and soon was convinced

that I had entered into a chamber of some sort. Then my foot struck something which slipped from beneath it and, reaching down, I picked up what I judged from the feeling to be a very large oyster shell. I got down on my knees, and groping about soon learned that the floor was covered to a depth of a foot or more with the shells, although there were but few of them close to the wall.

"It didn't take me long to make the circuit of the chamber which I found to be nearly square and, so far as I could judge, about twenty feet across. The shells seemed to cover the entire floor except near the walls and there must have been many bushels of them. I broke one of them open and the oyster was perfectly fresh, a fact which led me to believe that at high tide water came in and covered them, though I found no trace of an inlet. Well, I took off my shirt and packed in it as many of the shells as it would hold and made my way out. Raw oysters would, I knew, make a very welcome addition to my menu.

"The tide had turned by the time I reached the boat and it was no hard job to push it free. A good breeze was blowing toward the South, so I decided to go that way. I stepped the mast and in a few more moments I was well away from the island. Sometime I may tell you something about that sail, but not now. It would take too long. Suffice it to say that it was six days before I saw land again, and then

I had been without food for nearly thirty-six hours and without water nearly as long, and was about at the end of my rope, when another island came in sight. It was inhabited and I was saved, but it was nearly three months before I got passage on a ship.

"And now comes the most interesting part of the story. I found that I had carried away twenty of the largest oysters I ever saw and in an even dozen of them I found a pearl and each one was a beauty."

"But how did they get there, the oysters, I mean?" Bob asked.

"I don't know, but I've made a good many guesses since then and I think the best one is that they were put there by someone who had an object in keeping it a secret. Of course, how he got them there I have no idea and I may be away off."

"And you're going there again to get some more?" Jack asked.

"That's the idea. I suppose it seems strange that I've waited so long, but there's a reason. In the first place I've got all the money I want, and I'm only going for the fun of the thing. And then, while I always intended to go sometime, I wanted to wait long enough to give the owner of them, provided there is anyone who owns them, a chance to get them. If they're still there, after more than twenty years, I think we can safely say they belong to whoever gets them first."

"I should say so," Bob agreed.

"So I've bought a boat, and I'm going to try to find that island again and it's likely to prove a man-sized job," Mr. Lakewood assured them with a smile.

CHAPTER II.

AT SEA.

"Say yes, Dad."

"What do you say, Mother?"

Bob gave the order, and his father asked the question, while Jack and their uncle held their breath, waiting for her reply. Mrs. Lakewood looked first at one boy and then at the other.

"I believe I'll feel safer knowing that they're with Silas than to have them tramping goodness knows where, alone, and I've got pretty used to that," she smiled.

"That means we can go," Jack shouted, jumping up and giving his mother a bear-like hug.

"Save the pieces," she laughed.

"I'll take good care of them," their uncle promised.

"I know you will, Silas," she smiled as soon as Bob released her from another hug.

Followed busy days of preparation, interspersed with several trips which the boys insisted on taking with their uncle to show him some of the wonders of their State. But finally the night before their de-

parture came, and as they were eating supper their father suddenly asked:

"How about that Photoradio? Going to take it with you?"

"What's that?" his brother asked eagerly. "Did I understand you to say a photoradio?"

"That's what you did. It's a machine the boys invented, and what's more, it works. Tell him about it, Bob."

"Well, I snum, what do you know about that?" His surprise was manifest in his voice and, as soon as the meal was over, he had to have a demonstration.

"Do you realize that there's a fortune in that thing?" he asked, when they had shown him what the machine would do.

"Maybe," Bob replied.

"No maybe about it," the other declared. "And when we get back I'm going to look into it, that is, provided you want me to."

"Of course we'd be glad to have you," Bob assured him. "But what do you think about taking it with us?"

"How far'll it work?"

"We've only tried it over a distance of about fifty miles."

"And it worked good that far?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, what's the matter with taking one end of

it and leave the other end here? Maybe we can shoot some scenes up here. Who knows? You know how to run it?" he asked turning to his brother.

"Yes, Bob showed me how," Mr. Lakewood replied.

"Then we'll do it. It won't take up much room."

They left early the following morning and arriving in New York shortly before midnight, went to The Commodore where Mr. Lakewood had engaged rooms by wire. He had told them that it would take a couple of days to get things in shape before they sailed, although the captain and crew had been engaged before he had left for The Fortress.

"There's always a lot of things to see to at the last minute, and I don't like to be rushed," he explained as they said good night.

They were up bright and early the next morning, as their uncle had promised to take them over to a wharf on the East River where the Valkyrie was tied up, and they were most anxious to see the boat. He had evaded their questioning regarding her, telling them that he wanted them to get their first impression of her when they saw her, so, beyond the fact that she was an oil burning yacht, about eighty feet long, they knew practically nothing. Knowing that their uncle was a man of considerable wealth, they were quite sure that he would have a good boat. But they were not prepared for the beautiful vessel which

met their gaze as they hurried out to the end of the wharf shortly after eight o'clock.

"Gee, but she's a beauty," Jack gasped, as he stood still for a moment and gazed at the beautiful lines of the boat, as she rode at anchor about fifty feet out in the river.

"I reckon Ole had to move her out there," Mr. Lakewood said, his face flushed with pleasure at Jack's praise. "She was tied up here, but I expect they wanted the room."

Just then a man appeared on her deck, and Mr. Lakewood waved his hand, and, a moment later, a small rowboat was lowered.

"How's tricks?" the owner asked the small freckled Irishman who saluted him as the boat touched the wharf.

"Niver was better, sir," he grinned.

"These are my two nephews, and they're going with us, and, boys, this is the first mate of the Valkyrie, Patrick Barney," he introduced them.

"Faith an' it's meself as is glad to know yees," the mate assured them holding out a hand to each, and their eager grasp must have made him sure that his pleasure was reciprocated.

"Where's Ole?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"The Cap'n wint up town aboot an hour ago, but he said as how he'd be back by nine o'clock. Will yees go out?"

"I reckon. Come on, boys, jump in and we'll look her over a bit."

The second mate, a large bony man in the early thirties and evidently a typical Down East Yankee, whom their uncle introduced as Josh Kelley, met them as they mounted the companion way and both boys took an instant liking to him.

The boat had been newly painted, and her brass shown like gold, and everywhere she was spotlessly clean.

"She's guaranteed to do twenty-five knots," their uncle told them as he led the way to the cabin.

The cabin was plainly but very comfortably furnished, and a large book case on one side was filled with books of travel, history and fiction.

"Thought probably we'd want to do some reading," he explained as he saw Bob's eyes fixed on the books. "This is your cabin," he said a few minutes later, after he had taken them below and showed them the engine, which Jack declared was a peach. As he spoke he pushed open a door leading from the main deck and pushed them in. It also was plainly furnished, but they saw at a glance that it contained everything necessary to their comfort. "My cabin is next door," he told them, after they had looked the room over and had voiced their approval.

"Gee, but I wish we were going to start right this minute," Jack declared.

"Well, it won't be long now," Mr. Lakewood smiled. "If Ole's ready, I think we can pull out sometime tomorrow afternoon. There he is now," he added, as a deep voice boomed out. "Come out, and I'll introduce you to the captain."

Captain Ole Olsen was a Sweed and, as Jack laughed later "a mighty big one," standing well over six feet and well proportioned. Somewhat to their surprise, he spoke with practically no accent, although, as Jack declared as soon as he was out of hearing, his voice seemed to come from his boots. As soon as the introductions were over, Mr. Lakewood asked him if he could be ready to sail on the following afternoon.

"Sure thing," Captain Ole assured him. "The mates are on board and the rest of the crew will be on hand not later than tomorrow at nine o'clock."

"Good. Then we'll be off as soon as we can get here after dinner. You see," he smiled, "these boys are in a hurry and——"

"And I don't blame 'em a bit," the captain smiled.

"How many'll there be in the crew?" Bob asked as soon as they had been set ashore.

"Eight or ten besides the officers," his uncle told him. "By the way," he added. "How did you like those three?"

"They're fine, I think," Bob assured him, and Jack nodded approval.

"I've known Ole for years and he's all right and so's Pat. I've known him for several years, but I don't know a thing about Josh. Ole picked him up a few days ago down and out, so to speak, and knowing from his talk that he knew the sea, and being sorry for him, I suppose, took him on as second officer. I imagine he's all right."

"If I'm any judge he is," Jack said as they stepped into a taxi and started off downtown.

"He struck me as having an honest face and a mighty agreeable one," Bob added.

"Oh, I guess he's all right only——"

But just then the cab gave a sudden lurch to avoid striking another car and the sentence was left unfinished. They reached the hotel shortly before dinner time, and, as soon as the meal was finished, Mr. Lakewood told them that he would leave them to their own resources as he had considerable business to attend to. "But mind your step and don't get lost," he cautioned them. He was back in time for supper and in the evening they went to a show, and the following morning he left them again, saying that he wouldn't be back for dinner, but would meet them at the wharf at two o'clock. "The bills are all paid here," he said, "including your dinner, so you eat here, and I'll see you at two."

"I say, Bob, did it strike you yesterday that Uncle Si was a bit suspicious of the second mate?"

The two boys were finishing their dinner in the hotel, and, as it was only a few minutes past twelve o'clock, they were taking their time.

"Now you speak of it, I do remember he kinder hesitated when he spoke of him, why?"

"That's what I was wondering. You remember he said he knew nothing about him except what he told us, and I can't see why he should feel the way he seemed to. He looked honest enough to me."

"Same here, but perhaps Uncle Si's a better reader of character than you or I."

"It's not impossible," Jack acknowledged slowly.

"Gee, but you sure do hate yourself," Bob laughed as he rose and pushed back his chair.

They were at the wharf at a quarter to two and a few minutes before the hour their uncle joined them, and in another ten minutes they were all on board.

"Crew all on board?" Mr. Lakewood asked as Captain Ole Olsen greeted them.

"All here, sir, and we can start in ten minutes if you're ready."

"The sooner the better, eh, boys?"

"You bet," they both replied.

The captain at once gave the order to up anchor, and almost immediately the voyage had begun.

"And many a stormy wind may blow e'er Jack

comes home again," Jack sang as the boat swung her bow around and headed for the Upper Bay.

"There's many a truth spoken in jest," Bob reminded him.

"Don't I know it?" Jack retorted. "I mean just what the song says. I reckon we're going to see more or less rough weather before we get to the end of this voyage."

It was characteristic of the two boys that by the time they were passing through The Narrows they were more or less acquainted with every member of the crew, including Wong, the Chinese cook. Wong was of uncertain age. He might have been fifty, and then again, as Jack put it, he might just as well be a hundred and fifty. Later he confided to them in secret that he was eighty. His face was deeply furrowed with wrinkles and his slanting eyes were deep set beneath heavy brows, and he still clung to his pig tail, which reached far below his waist. But, if his looks were against him, his disposition, as Jack put it, was in inverse ratio to his looks, and they took instant liking to the old man, and, as it afterward turned out, he was no less favorably impressed with them.

"Them velly fine boys, we catch um plenty much fun," he told the captain soon after their first trip to the galley.

Down in the engine room they next made the ac-

quaintance of Chief Engineer Wallace MacDonald, a large weather-beaten Scotchman and his assistant, a young red-headed Irishman, who answered to the name of Sandy. Then there were four deck hands, three of whom were Yankees and the other a Sweed. These, together with an Irish lad, Jerry Finagin, who waited on the table and washed dishes and made himself useful in other ways, and another boy, who answered to the name of Patsy Malone, and to whom was intrusted the care of the cabins, completed the crew. "And they're one fine bunch, I'm telling you," Jack whispered to Bob, as they were leaning over the rail watching Sandy Hook sink beneath the horizon.

Just as the last glimpse of land disappeared the gong rang for supper and they hurried to the officers' mess room where they found their uncle together with the captain and first mate awaiting them. There was no doubt in their minds after that first meal regarding Wong's ability as a cook, and Mr. Lakewood complimented the captain on his selection.

"He's cooked for me before," Captain Ole told them, "and I knew you'd be pretty hard to suit if he didn't fill the bill."

"Well, he's already filled my stomach," Jack laughed, and Bob added: "And the filling's been pretty good stuff let me tell you."

The Valkyrie was equipped with an up-to-date wireless and a radio receiving set. Mr. Lakewood had

proposed taking an operator but the boys had persuaded him that it was unnecessary as they were both licensed operators and either of them could fill the bill, as Jack put it. Before leaving New York, Bob had sent a telegram to his father telling him when they were to sail and instructing him that they would try to send him a picture at ten o'clock that night. So, as soon as the meal was over, they hurried to their cabin and for a couple of hours busied themselves setting up the machine.

"There, I reckon she's all right now," Bob said as he finished the adjustment of a condenser.

"And it's only nine o'clock," Jack announced. "Guess we might's well go on deck for awhile."

On deck they found their uncle and captain listening to a radio concert and for the next hour they were well entertained.

"Five minutes to ten," Jack announced at the close of a selection.

"Then it's time we were getting busy," Bob added as he rose from his chair. "You and the captain care to come along?" he asked.

"Sure thing," Mr. Lakewood replied. "Come along, Cap'n and see what those two boys have rigged up."

"What is it?" Captain Ole asked, rubbing the side of his nose as he gazed at the machine a minute later.

"It's a photoradio," Bob told him.

"You mean it'll send pictures?"

"That's it, but we don't know how far it'll reach. We've only tried it for about fifty miles."

"And where you going to send to now?"

"We're hoping to reach Maine, our home."

"That must be close on to six hundred miles from here."

"That's about what we thought."

As Bob spoke he threw over the switch, and Jack stepped in front of the lens and began throwing kisses and smiling. Then Bob took his place and after he had gone through a few like motions, they insisted that their uncle play his part and then nothing would do, but the captain must at least make his bow. He stepped forward somewhat doubtfully and made a very gracious bow, after which, Bob threw off the switch and threw on another.

"Now to see if we can get a reply," he said, as he stepped back and watched the circle of light on the wall of the room. But, though they waited nearly an hour no picture appeared and they had to conclude that the experiment, at their end at least, was a failure.

"Something's wrong," Bob declared, as he finally gave it up and threw off the power.

"But I'd like to know whether or not they got us," Jack said.

"Well, so would I, but I reckon we'll have to wait

till we get to Panama. We'll get letters there," Bob told him.

"I'm going into the wireless room and listen in for awhile," Jack announced. "It's just possible that father'll send a wireless although I doubt it."

"All right, I'll go with you," Bob said.

"And I reckon we might's well go back and get some more of that concert if it isn't all done," Captain Ole proposed.

"What do you suppose was the matter with the thing?" Jack asked a few minutes later as he sat in the wireless room with the receivers on his head.

"There's a lot of things could account for it," Bob replied from the couch, at one side of the little room, where he was stretched reading a book. "Not enough power for one thing, and then, you know, father's not much used to working it and he might have got something wrong."

A half hour later, having failed to pick up the call letters of the Valkyrie, Jack was about to give it up when suddenly, through the night, clear and sharp came a signal which brought him to his feet with a quick cry.

"What is it?" Bob asked.

"S-O-S."

"Where from?"

"Doesn't say yet."

"Does he sound near?"

"Can't be far off. There, he's starting to give his position."

Jack had seized a piece of paper and began putting down the message.

"Get the captain, quick," he ordered.

"S-T-E-A-M-E-R D-A-U-N-T-L-E-S-S O-N
F-I-R-E H-U-N-D-R-E-D M-I-L-E-S E-A-S-T
C-A-P-E M-A-Y."

He had just finished spelling out the words when Bob returned with his uncle and the captain.

"They're a hundred miles east of Cape May," he told them. "Just a minute," as Captain Ole was about to speak. "They sending more."

"H-U-R-R-Y. S-O-S S-O-S."

"We're off Atlantic City now," Captain Ole told them as he started from the room to give orders to change the course. "Heard anything more?" he asked as he returned a moment later.

"Not a thing," Jack told him.

"Well, keep on watch and if you pick up anything let me know at once. I'll be on the bridge." He went out and Mr. Lakewood followed him leaving the boys alone.

"She's sure picking up speed," Bob said as he felt the quiver of the boat's engine.

"And I reckon she'll need to if we're going to get there in time to be of any use. How's the weather? Beginning to blow a bit, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's blowing some and it's clouding up too."

"That'll make it bad if it comes on thick. There goes the S-O-S again but it's pretty faint."

"Anything else?" Bob asked anxiously.

"No, just the—yes they're sending now."

"H-U-R-R-Y S-O-S S-O-S."

"Have you answered them?"

"Sure. I told them we were on our way."

"Better give 'em another call."

Jack threw over the switch and pressed his key.

"V-A-L-K-Y-R-I-E C-O-M-I-N-G," he sent out into the night.

"G-O-O-D V-A-L-K-Y-R-I-E H-U-R-R-Y," came back the answer.

"Better run out and tell Cap'n Ole," Jack suggested, and Bob rushed out the door.

He found Captain Ole and his uncle pacing the little bridge and straining their eyes in an effort to sight the burning ship.

"He says to hurry," Bob shouted.

"We're doing that," his uncle called back.

Bob rushed back to the wireless room to find Jack taking down another message.

"F-I-R-E G-E-T-T-I-N-G C-L-O," he followed Jack's pencil as he set the letters down and then he stopped.

"Can't get another sound," he said after a moment's pause.

"And that means——"

"That he's had to get out," Jack finished, tearing the phones from his head. Let's get out on deck, we can't do any more good in here."

"You go out and let me listen a bit. He may send again," Bob proposed as he picked up the phones and clapped them on his head.

"All right. I'll run out and tell them about that last call. Be back in a minute."

"See anything?" Bob asked as Jack returned a minute later.

"Not a thing, but it's getting pretty thick out and Cap'n Ole says it's going to rain."

They waited another fifteen minutes and, hearing nothing, decided that it was useless to wait longer. So they joined the others on the bridge.

"Don't you think we ought to see something pretty soon?" Jack asked as he reached the captain's side.

"Can't tell," the captain told him. "Their position's pretty indefinite and you can't see very far in this weather. If it had only stayed clear," he added.

The wind, which had been increasing steadily for the past hour, was now kicking up considerable of a sea and the boat was pitching badly as her powerful engine drove her at top speed.

"Look! Over there a bit to our left!"

Bob pointed as he shouted the words.

"It's a rocket," the captain cried and gave quick

orders to the first mate, who had the wheel, to change his course a couple of points. "We wasn't very far out of the way at that," he added.

In a few minutes more a red glow showed them plainly the position of the burning boat and their hearts beat with hope that they would arrive in time after all.

"If they can hold out another half hour we'll be there," the captain told them.

"Don't you suppose they've taken to the boats," Mr. Lakewood asked.

"Can't tell. They'll likely stick to the ship as long as they can," Captain Ole replied.

The light from the burning ship was rapidly growing brighter as the Valkyrie rushed through the water and, now and then, a rocket burst high above showing that some of the crew at least were still on board. But, after a time, they ceased, and when they judged that they were not more than a half mile away there came a dull heavy boom and in another moment the light disappeared.

"That was her boiler exploding and she's gone down sure as guns," Captain Ole shouted.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE.

FOR a full minute after the captain's words no one spoke. Then Bob, who was gripping the rail tightly with both hands, said: "But they must have taken to the boats. We can pick them up, can't we?"

"We can try," his uncle assured him.

"Turn on the searchlight, Pat," the captain ordered and you'd better slow her down to about half speed. We don't want to run any of them down."

Almost instantly a broad beam of light spread itself over the water in front of the boat which was already losing headway as the engineer obeyed the mate's signal.

"Keep her sweeping about and all of you use your eyes," the captain cried. "We don't want to miss them."

For some minutes the Valkyrie forged ahead and it seemed that they must have passed the spot where the steamer had gone down when, suddenly, Jack shouted: "There's one of them, off to the right there."

Just at that moment the mate shifted the search-

light a bit and, by its light, they could see a small boat rising and falling only a few hundred feet away.

"Stand by to throw them a rope," Captain Ole shouted to the sailors who were gathered on the deck below.

"Aye, aye, sir. We see them," was the reply.

First Mate Pat had already changed his course so as to bring the yacht alongside the smaller boat.

"There are only four men in it," Bob said.

"She must have been a freighter," Jack replied.

The men in the boat had stopped rowing and were all ready to catch the rope, which was thrown them a moment later as the engine of the Valkyrie stopped and she swept alongside.

"Easy, now, don't let her bump too hard there," one of the sailors cautioned as they began to carefully pull in on the line.

Although the water was rough, the four men managed to fend off their boat with their oars until it rubbed the side of the larger vessel with scarcely a bump.

"Make the line fast to the bow," one of the sailors ordered as another lowered a rope ladder.

One by one the men mounted the ladder and soon all were on deck.

"How about the rest of your crew?" asked Captain Ole, who had descended from the bridge followed by the others.

"Ay, tank day all got in boat," one of the men replied.

"How many are they?"

"Twelve, mebbly two more," one of the others replied.

"And how many boats did you have?"

"Two more."

"Know which way they went?"

"No know. We went first boat."

"Start her up," the captain shouted to the mate and immediately the throb of the engine was resumed. "One of you men take these fellows to the galley and tell Wong to fill them up with soup and hot coffee," he added as he started up the stairs followed by the boys and Mr. Lakewood.

Fifteen minutes later, a second boat was sighted and five more men were taken on board. On being questioned, one of the men said that the other boat, carrying the captain, together with his wife and daughter and two men, had pushed off just after them, but they had almost at once lost sight of it and were unable to say which way they had gone.

"Well, all we can do is to cruise around till we pick them up," Captain Ole declared as he started up the stairway and gave the mate the order to go ahead.

The rain was now falling heavily, and so thick was

the weather that even the powerful searchlight was unable to penetrate any great distance.

"Gee, but it's like looking for a needle in a haystack," Jack grumbled after they had made several turns.

"Maybe they've been swamped," Bob suggested.

"Pray God they haven't," Mr. Lakewood said fervently, as he placed a hand on Bob's arm. "There are two women in that boat, you know," he added.

But an hour passed, and no sight of the missing boat had rewarded their search.

"I'm afraid it's no use," Captain Ole said mournfully.

"But we won't give up," Mr. Lakewood declared, a note of fierce determination sounding in his voice.

"Of course not," Captain Ole assured him. "I didn't mean that, but it's been so long that I'm afraid we may be miles away from them."

"But we aren't," Bob shouted. "There they are, just ahead of us."

Even as he spoke, the others caught sight of the boat wallowing in heavy sea and the captain gave a quick order to the mate to swing her over a point to avoid running her down. But before the course of the vessel could be changed Bob saw one of the men in the boat rise to his feet and at almost the same instant a heavy wave hit her and over she went.

"Quick!" he shouted as he started down the stairs closely followed by Jack.

By the time the boys had reached the after deck, two of the sailors had pulled in one of the boats which had been trailing behind and, in less time than it takes to tell it, the four were in it and were pulling toward the upturned boat now some hundred feet astern. Three men were clinging to the boat and one of them had an arm about a woman, but of the other there was nothing to be seen.

In the heavy sea it was not an easy matter to get them into the boat, but it was soon accomplished.

"There's another woman, isn't there?" Bob shouted as he lifted the woman over the side.

"My little girl," the woman moaned.

"She's lost," the man who had been supporting her cried.

Jack was standing in the stern of the boat and suddenly his quick eye caught a gleam of white some twenty feet behind. It was only a glimpse but it was enough.

"Stand by, Bob!" he shouted as he dove head first into the boiling water.

He struck at an angle and scarcely went beneath the surface, and a few powerful strokes brought him to the place where he judged he had seen the girl, but now there was nothing to be seen. Taking a deep breath and breathing a prayer, he plunged down-

ward. Down and still down he swam, hoping against hope that he might be successful. He realized that, even had it been the girl he had seen, the chances of finding her were very slight, but there was a chance, and he was taking it. Once he opened his eyes and tried to pierce the blackness, but he could not see an inch, so he quickly closed them. Finally he knew that he could go no farther and was about to turn and make for the surface when his hand struck something. It was soft and felt like hair and he knew instantly that he had found her. Getting a firm grasp he kicked out with all his strength and began to fight his way upward.

He had, however, hardly turned when the realization came that his strength was almost gone and his lungs began to pain with a dull ache. But he was not one to yield so long as a breath of life remained and, with his free hand and both feet he struggled with the strength of desperation. The girl felt like a lump of lead dragging him down and he doubted if he was making any progress. Still he would not give up, although now his lungs seemed on the point of bursting. Would he never reach the surface? It seemed to him that he had been climbing for ages. Then suddenly the pain left his lungs, and for an instant a strange feeling of rest stole over him. Then nothing.

"He's coming around."

The words seemed to come from a great distance.

"Keep rolling him."

These words seemed a bit nearer, and he was conscious of a feeling of nausea, also that he was being manhandled in an extremely disagreeable manner. But he was too weak to protest, and the punishment continued.

"There, I reckon the water's all out of him."

He sincerely hoped so, if it meant an end of the treatment.

"Turn him over and work his arms up and down."

That was Bob's voice, and, as he was turned on his back he struggled to open his eyes while a faint smile parted his lips.

"All right, old man. Take it easy," Bob's voice soothed him.

"But, but the girl?" he whispered.

"We got her."

"Alive?"

"We hope so," Bob told him. "No more talking now," he ordered.

Gentle hands picked him up and carried him to his cabin and placed him in his cot, and Bob sat down beside him.

"How do you feel, old man?" he whispered anxiously.

"Punk," Jack smiled faintly.

"Well, it's no wonder, seeing that you swallowed

pretty nearly the whole Atlantic Ocean. But you keep still for awhile and you'll be all right."

"But tell me how you got me. I don't remember."

"It was a mighty close squeak, let me tell you. You see, we were watching for you to come up and I was getting terribly worried when one of the fellows made a wild grab over the side of the boat and nearly tipped it over, but he caught hold of your collar and we pulled you in."

"And—and I had hold of the girl?"

"By the hair of her head, yes. Your fingers were locked so tight that we had hard work to pry them loose."

"And—she?"

"I honestly don't know, Jack, whether she'll make the grade or not," Bob replied soberly. "Her mother and father are with her now and are doing all they can, but, of course, it isn't as though we had a doctor on board with a pulmotor. She's pretty far gone, and that's the truth, but she wasn't dead, and while there's life there's hope, you know."

"I—I hope she'll live," Jack whispered. "I—I worked so hard to save her. It doesn't seem as though God would let her die."

"We'll ask Him not to," Bob whispered back as he sank to his knees beside the bunk. "Now you see if you can go to sleep and I'll go see how she is," he

added a few minutes later as he rose to his feet.

Out on the deck he met his uncle, who told him that the girl had not as yet recovered consciousness, but they were still hopeful, as her heart was fairly strong. "How's Jack?" he asked.

"He's coming all right. I just told him to go to sleep, and I imagine he's off by this time."

"Best thing for him to do. That was a brave thing he did."

"I'll say it was, but that's Jack," Bob agreed proudly.

"And God was very good to him and to us," Mr. Lakewood added.

"Sure thing."

The boat had been put about and was now racing at top speed for Cape May, and dawn was breaking as Bob and his uncle were talking. The rain had ceased and the wind had fallen to a stiff breeze.

"It's going to clear, I think," Mr. Lakewood declared, pointing toward the east.

Two hours later the cry of "Land, ho!" came from the lookout and in another hour they were tying up at the wharf before the town of Cape May.

"I'll see if I can find a doctor," Mr. Lakewood said to Bob as the gang plank hit the wharf.

"Let me go," Bob insisted and, without waiting for any argument he darted past his uncle and was off before he could make any objection.

He came to a doctor's sign before he had gone four blocks and, the doctor fortunately being at home, it was not more than twenty minutes from the time the boat reached the wharf before he had him on board. It was perhaps thirty minutes later that the doctor came from the cabin where they had taken the girl. He was followed by a woman about forty years of age and her husband, the captain of the steamer which had burned. Bob did not need to ask the verdict. One look at the face of the mother told him that the girl would live.

"She'll pull through all right," the doctor told him, but before he could say anything the woman had thrown her arms about his neck and had planted a firm kiss on his lips.

As she was a pretty woman Bob did not, as he afterward confessed to Jack, object to her mistake, but he blushed as he stammered:

"I—I'm afraid you've made a mistake, Madam."

"Didn't you save my Lucy?" the woman demanded.

"No, Madam."

"Who did, then?"

"It was my brother, Jack," Bob told her.

"And where is he?" she demanded eagerly.

"I think he's asleep just now. You see, he was about all in when we pulled them out, and, while

he's sure to be all right, I made him go to sleep about an hour ago."

"You're sure he's all right?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, mam."

"And I can see him as soon as he wakes up?"

"Certainly, but—er——"

"But what?"

"Why, Jack's a bit bashful, and——"

"And you want to tell me that it would scare him if I kissed him?" she laughed.

"Well, er——"

"Well, I'm going to do it just them same," she insisted and, a few hours later, after Jack waked and declared that he was once more 'all wool and a yard wide,' she kept her word, much to that boy's confusion.

"I don't know how I can ever thank you," she told him as she released him.

"P-p-please don't try," Jack gasped.

"But if it hadn't been for you I wouldn't have any little girl now," she insisted.

"Well, I'm awfully glad that she's going to be all right," Jack told her.

"And if ever we can do anything for you, you—well, you know what I mean," the girl's father said as he wrung his hand.

Tears were in the man's eyes and Jack hastened to assure him that he would not hesitate to call on

him if ever occasion offered. The girl was taken ashore a few hours later, but not before she had seen Jack and thanked him for herself. She was a very pretty girl, just past sixteen, and the boy flushed to the roots of his hair as he took her hand and told her how glad he was that he had been able to be of service.

"You look as though you were in love," Bob grinned as he came from the cabin.

"You ought to know all about it after the practice you had in Mexico," Jack retorted.

"Well, she is pretty."

"Who is?"

"Why, that girl in there."

"Sure she is. And, for that matter, so's the other one."

"You bet."

By four o'clock they were ready to put to sea again, and the captain was about to give the order to cast off when the first mate, who for some time had been leaning on the rail, and, from time to time, glancing up the street, said:

"My, Kelley hasn't returned yet, sir."

"He hasn't? I told him to be on board not later than three o'clock," the captain snapped.

"I know you did, sir?"

"Then why isn't he here?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Why don't you—no, of course you don't. Why should you."

"It's an accident he might have met with," Pat suggested.

"Accident your eye. If he isn't here in ten minutes I'll sail without him," the captain snorted.

Although a man with a soft heart, Captain Ole was a stickler for discipline on board ship, and well Pat knew it. The first mate was no great admirer of the lanky second officer, but he was a generous Irishman and he continued to glance up the street hoping to see his fellow officer each minute. But the minutes slipped past one by one until the ten had gone and still there was no sign of the man.

"Cast off," the captain shouted from the bridge.

"Aye, aye, sir," and a moment later the big hawsers were slipped from the snubbing posts and the Valkyrie, her propeller already turning, slowly slipped forward.

"There he is, sir," Pat shouted as he caught sight of the man running toward the wharf.

"Shall I wait?" the captain asked Mr. Lakewood who was standing by his side.

Mr. Lakewood hesitated for an instant.

"Reckon you'd better," he finally said.

Captain Ole gave the order and the boat slowly lost headway and then backed, Josh was waiting and,

as her side brushed the wharf, he jumped on board and she started ahead again.

"Well?" the captain demanded sternly, as the officer stood at the foot of the stairs.

"Sorry I kept you waitin', captain, but I couldn't help it," the mate replied.

"Why couldn't you?"

"I was detained."

"By what?"

"Business."

"You mean you won't tell me?"

"Reckon you'll have ter take my word fer it," he replied with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

"Well, it's lucky you didn't let your business hold you a minute longer or you'd lost your berth," the captain snapped as the mate turned away.

"Josh had been looking on the wine when it was red," Bob told Jack a few minutes later. "Only it was stronger than wine."

"How do you know?"

"I got a whiff of his breath as he passed me after his setto with the captain."

"Then it's no wonder he wouldn't tell him what was the cause of the delay."

"We're going to have trouble with him before this voyage is over," Bob said in a low tone.

"What makes you think so?" Jack asked anxiously.

"Don't know, but I feel it in my bones."

"Then I wish he'd waited a little longer."

"So do I."

"You going to tell uncle about it, the drinking, I mean?"

"You think I ought to?"

"I sure do."

"Then I will."

Bob got a chance to speak to his uncle a few minutes later and told him what he knew.

"I suspected it," Mr. Lakewood said, shaking his head doubtfully. "But don't say anything to anyone else. Most of these seafaring men will take a drink when they get a chance and, unless he's brought some of the stuff on board, he won't get another chance for some time. But I don't like the man for some reason, though I can't just say why."

The weather now was perfect, and the Valkyrie ploughed steadily southward, the boys enjoying every minute of the time. Each night, at ten o'clock, they started up the photoradio machine and ran it for a few minutes but, to their disappointment, they failed to get any reply. Finally they reached Colon, at the entrance to the Panama Canal. They were to lay up there for several hours to refill the oil tanks, and, as soon as they docked, the two boys started for the post office. As they expected, they found letters from home and were much pleased when they learned

that the pictures which they had sent by photoradio had come in fine.

"Then it's sure that father has something wrong with his end of it, when it comes to sending," Bob said as they started from the building intent on seeing as much of the place as possible in the few hours. They returned to the boat a half hour before starting time, and the first man they saw as they crossed the gang plank was Josh Kelley, and he looked, as Jack afterward remarked, as though he would enjoy biting a ten penny nail in two.

"What's the matter with his nibs?" Bob asked Pat as soon as they were on deck.

"Faith an' he's sore," Jimmie grinned.

"Someone step on his pet corn?" Jack asked.

"It's not that. He wanted for to go ashore an' the old man wouldn't let him."

"Didn't he kick?"

"I'll say he did, but sure an' it didn't get him anywhere at all. The old man jest told him thot if he went he could take his duds with him an' not come back, an' he didn't say iny mare at all."

It was the first time the boys had seen "The Big Ditch" and they were intensely interested during every moment of the trip through.

"Just think, Jack," Bob said, leaning on the rail and watching the shore line slip slowly past, "if it wasn't for this canal we'd have to go away down

round South America. This ditch saves us thousands of miles."

"You talk as though it was dug for your special benefit," Jack laughed.

"Well, I reckon it was dug as much for my benefit as for anyone's," Bob retorted.

"Well, it's sure some job."

"You said it."

It was late in the afternoon when they reached the end of the canal, and the boat was let down to sea level in the big lock.

"And now we're on the Pacific Ocean," Jack declared as the Valkyrie glided out of the lock.

"And it looks it's name just now," Bob added.

CHAPTER IV.

CATCHING A SHARK.

BEFORE many hours had passed Bob was to learn that the Pacific did not always live up to its name. When he awoke the following morning, shortly before seven o'clock, his first impression was that it was very hot, much hotter than when he had gone to bed the night before. For some moments he lay dozing, feeling too enervated to spring from the bed as was his custom on waking. Then came a loud rap on the door, and, at his invitation, it opened quickly and his uncle entered.

"Not up yet?" he asked.

"Not, but I will be in a jiffy," Bob replied as he swung his feet to the floor.

"What's the hurry?" came in sleepy tones from Jack's bunk on the other side of the little room.

"Looks as though we were running into a storm and you'd better get your breakfast before we strike," his uncle told them.

"Don't hear any wind," Jack said as he jumped up.

"There isn't a breath of air stirring."

"Then what makes you think it's going to blow?" Bob asked.

"That's the way they start down here. Better get a hustle on. Breakfast's all ready."

"We'll be there in two shakes of a dog's tail," Bob told him as he turned and left the cabin.

"Gee, but it's hot," Jack declared pulling on his trowsers.

"Hotter'n love in haying time," Bob agreed. "But I suppose we've got to expect that sort of thing down here. We're pretty near the equator you know."

As they emerged on deck three minutes later, a peculiar sensation struck both at the same instant. As their uncle had said, not a breath of air seemed stirring and the surface of the sea was like that of a mill pond, not so much as a ripple breaking its smoothness. The sun was half obscured by a thin haze, while, apparently rising from the ocean in the west, a low lying, dirty looking bank of clouds, caught their attention.

"Looks as though there might be some wind in them," Bob said pointing to the west.

"Wouldn't wonder," Jack agreed, just as Captain Ole came around a corner of the wheel house.

"Is it going to blow, Captain?" Bob asked.

"Yep, it's going to blow all right and mighty soon too. Had your breakfast?"

"Not yet."

"Then get it as soon as you can. This boat'll be standing on her tail before long, and no knowing how long it'll be before you get another square meal."

"He looks a bit worried," Jack said, as they hurried toward the mess cabin.

On the side of the room close to where they sat was a barometer and Bob glanced at it as they took their places at the table.

"29.75," he read the figures aloud.

"That's pretty low, isn't it?" Jack asked.

"Rather."

They hurried through the meal, but before they had finished they were aware of a peculiar moaning sound which seemed to be stealing over the surface of the water, and they noted that the glass had fallen five full points since they had sat down.

"She's sinking pretty fast," Jack declared, as he got up from his chair.

"Yep, I reckon it's going to be what they call a rip snorter," Bob said as he followed him from the room.

On deck, they found the crew making fast every moveable object under the direction of Pat Barney who greeted them with a cheery grin as he said "the top uv the mornin' to yer." Already a slight breeze was rippling the surface of the sea and the bank of clouds had spread until the entire sky was covered.

"You boys had better get below," Captain Ole shouted from the wheel house.

"You think there's danger?" Bob called back.

"Hope not, but you never can tell down here. This may be nothing but a hard blow and then again it may be a cyclone."

"We'd rather stay on deck if you don't mind," Bob told him and added: "Of course, we'll go below if it's your order."

"Oh, stay if you want to, but when she strikes she's apt to strike hard, and you want to be near something to cling to."

"We will," Bob assured him.

It was now growing rapidly darker, and the moaning sound was increasing in intensity. The air seemed to thicken perceptibly moment by moment, and it was hot and moist. Then the first gust struck. It was not quite a squall, but was strong enough to cause the Valkyrie to slide off her course several points.

"If you're going to stay on deck, you'd better get on oil skins."

Mr. Lakewood had come from the main cabin unnoticed until he spoke. He was clad in oil skins which made him look like a typical longshoreman.

"All right, we'll get them," Bob replied as he started for the cabin closely followed by Jack.

By the time they had reached the locker room, the

boat was pitching rather violently and they had to watch their steps on the way back. Once more on deck they were surprised to see how rough a sea the wind had kicked up in so short a time. Huge rollers, their crests tipped with white foam, bore down on them from the north-east, and it seemed that the boat was rushing through the water at a terrific pace. Each moment the wind seemed to be increasing in strength. It came in gusts at short intervals, and each one seemed stronger than the one before. 'And now huge drops of rain began to pelt down, and in less than five minutes it was raining in torrents. It was now so dark that they could see hardly the length of the ship.

Mr. Lakewood was standing at the foot of the stairway leading to the bridge, and, as they made their way to his side, they could see that he was worried.

"You think it's a cyclone?" Bob shouted.

"No, I don't think so, but it's going to be some blow," his uncle shouted back.

Just then a loud whirring sound rose above the noise of the wind, coming from the rear, and both boys looked at their uncle.

"That's the propeller," he told them. "The way she's pitching now it'll be out of the water about half the time. But don't you get scared," he aded. "The

Valkyrie is seaworthy and she'll outtide the storm all right."

The ship was now pitching so violently that they were all obliged to cling fast to the railing of the stairway to keep their feet.

"If this isn't a cyclone then I'd hate to see one," Jack laughed as a huge wave sent a smother of spray over the bow.

"What makes you think it isn't one?" Bob asked his uncle.

"They don't usually come in the morning," he replied.

Soon after, Mr. Lakewood proposed that they join the captain in the wheel house.

"There's plenty of room in there and I don't reckon he'll mind, and there's no use staying out here in the rain. But you want to cling tight going up those stairs."

He led the way and the boys followed. Once Jack was all but blown off his feet but he recovered his balance and finally they were all inside.

"How does it look to you?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"It's not so bad," Captain Ole shouted back.

Bob looked at Jack, and Jack looked at Bob. "What did he call bad?" was the question in their eyes.

"Think it'll get worse?"

"No. Glass is rising."

But it continued to blow with unabated fury, so far as the boys could see, for several hours, but finally, along toward noon, they could tell that the violence of the wind was decreasing, and a little later the sun peeped out from behind the clouds, just as a gong struck telling them that dinner was ready.

"So we aren't going to miss a meal after all," Bob laughed as they started down the stairway.

"But I'll tell you now that I was worried for a bit, and so was the captain," their uncle told them. "The beginning of that storm had all the earmarks of a rip snorter at first. I've been through them, and I know the signs, but we must have just struck the edge of it."

"And it was some edge at that," Jack laughed as he sat down at the table.

Although the boat was still pitching too violently to permit of anything of a liquid nature to be placed on the table there was plenty of solid food, and all were hungry.

When they returned to the deck, the rain had ceased and the wind had slackened to a stiff breeze, but the waves were still running high enough to cause the Valkyrie to pitch rather violently as she slid from crest to trough.

"She didn't stand on her tail though," Jack shouted to Captain Ole who was still at the wheel.

"An' you can thank your lucky stars that she didn't," he called back.

"Did we get off our course much?" Bob asked as they reached the wheel house.

"Not much we didn't," the captain replied indignantly. "I shot the sun just before you came out, and, unless I'm off my reckoning, we'll cross the line in about an hour from now."

"You mean the equator?" Jack asked.

"Sure, I mean the equator. What other line is there down here, I'd like to know?"

"Well, I reckon we're lucky that we didn't get snarled up in it," Bob laughed as Pat came in, and the captain turned the wheel over to him and announced that he was going to get something to eat.

"Snarled up in what?" Pat asked as soon the captain left the room.

"Oh, that was only some of Bob's foolishness," Jack told him. "He was trying to be funny because the captain spoke of the equator as a line."

By nightfall the sea had fallen to a gentle swell, and there was every indication of fair weather ahead.

"What's that thing following us?"

It was the following morning, shortly after ten o'clock, and the two boys, together with their uncle, were sitting beneath an awning in the stern of the boat as Bob asked the question, at the same time

pointing to a triangular shaped object some hundred feet astern.

"It's a shark," his uncle told him.

"I've been watching him for some time, and that's what I thought it was. He must be a pretty good sized one."

"Yes, they get pretty large down this way and pretty ugly too."

"Well, I hate to fall overboard just now," Jack shuddered. "Do they often follow boats that way?" he asked.

"It's not unusual," his uncle told him. "Probably someone threw over something he could eat and he's hoping he'll do it again. I've known one to follow a ship for more than a day. How'd you like to catch him?"

"Could we?"

Both boys asked the question at the same time.

"If we've got a shark hook aboard we can have a try at him," Mr. Lakewood said as he arose. "You keep your eye on him and I'll go see if I can find one. Ole ought to have some."

"Talk about fishing," Bob said as his uncle left them.

"Wonder what kind of a rod you use," Jack mused.

"Rod! I reckon you don't use a rod at all."

"A body'd think you'd fished for sharks all your life," Jack declared.

"But just imagine playing that fellow on a rod. Why, he's likely all of twelve feet long."

"Some baby," Jack grinned, keeping his eye on the fish, which was now a little nearer.

Mr. Lakewood returned a few minutes later, carrying a large reel of line which was nearly as thick as a clothes line, and fastened to the end was the largest fish hook the boys had ever seen.

"Thought he must have one," he smiled as he put the reel down on the deck. "Now, Jack, you go ask Wong for a big hunk of salt pork, while Bob and I are getting this reel anchored so that we can handle our friend out there provided we hook on to him."

The reel was a strongly built affair and was provided with a handle, which was long and looked firm enough to stand any reasonable strain which might be put on it.

"How you going to hold it?" Bob asked as Jack disappeared.

"It's fixed so that it can be attached to this snubbing post this way," and Mr. Lakewood proceeded to make it firm with the aid of a bit of chain which he had brought with him.

Everything was ready by the time Jack returned with a hunk of pork, which must have weighed all of five pounds.

"This big enough?" he asked.

"I reckon it'll do," taking the meat, Mr. Lakewood

stuck the hook, which was fully a foot in length, through the middle of it.

"Now, Jack, suppose you go and ask whoever's at the wheel to slow down to about half speed. We're going so fast that I'm afraid the bait'll just skip along the surface and, you know, a shark has to turn over pretty well onto his back when he bites."

Jack found Pat on the wheel, and, on being told what was up, the Irishman at once rang for half speed, and almost immediately the boat again began to slow down. Jack hurried back to find his uncle slowly paying out the line.

"Had a bite?" he chuckled.

"Not yet," Bob replied.

There was a sinker on the line, but in spite of it the hunk of meat at first skipped over the surface of the water but, as the speed of the boat lessened, it soon disappeared.

"How much line have we got?" Bob asked.

"Ole said there was about a hundred feet," his uncle told him.

"Then we must have out about fifty feet now," Jack said.

"Just about."

"I don't see his fin," Bob said a moment later.

"Maybe he's—" Jack began, but before he could finish what he was going to say, there was a violent tug on the line and at the same instant there was a

tremendous commotion in the water some seventy-five feet astern.

"We've hooked him," Bob shouted.

The line was now running out rapidly, and, almost before he had finished speaking, the last layer left the reel, and, for a moment the line straightened out as taut as a bowstring.

"Shall I try to reel in?" Jack shouted excitedly.

"Go ahead," his uncle consented. "After that jerk, I reckon the line will hold him.

To his great surprise, the line came in easily and he had recovered fully thirty feet when there was a sudden reversal of program on the part of the big fish, and the handle of the reel was jerked out of his hand with a suddenness which made him gasp. Again the reel ran bare, and again the line straightened out.

"Better let him tire himself out," Mr. Lakewood suggested with a smile. "I reckon that line's going to hold him."

"Gee, but did you see that," Jack gasped.

The shark had leaped clear of the water, and there was a loud splash as it fell back.

"I think we've got a whale instead of a shark," Bob declared.

"I've seen 'em bigger nor that feller."

They turned to find the second mate, Josh Kelley, standing close by the rail.

"How long do you reckon that fellow is?" Mr. Lakewood asked him.

"Not more'n eighteen feet," Josh replied.

"Isn't that pretty good sized?" Bob asked, as the fish again broke water.

"'Bout half grown."

"I'd add seven or eight feet to your estimate," Mr. Lakewood told him.

"Bet he isn't twenty."

"I never bet," Mr. Lakewood smiled. "But I'll be surprised if he doesn't run over twenty-five."

"What kind of a shark is it?" Bob asked.

"White shark, I should say," Josh told him.

"Are they the ugly kind?" Jack asked.

"They are that. They're man eaters. Isn't that so, Josh?" Mr. Lakewood asked, turning to the mate.

"Wal, if they're full grown thay're kinder unpleasant, so ter speak," the Yankee, with a slight sneer in his voice, acknowledged.

"Suppose you try to wind him in again, Jack," Mr. Lakewood suggested. "I'll go get my rifle. We want to be sure he's dead before he comes aboard. But look out he doesn't yank that handle out of your hand and break a wrist."

Jack began to turn the handle of the reel but the line came in with difficulty and he had about all he could do to regain any of it. Once again the fish made a sudden dash and the reel whirred as the line

ran out. The boy let it run till the reel was again bare and then began to wind in again. By this time several of the crew were gathered in the stern watching the fight, among them Captain Ole.

"You got quite a minnie," he smiled as the fish again leaped clear of the water.

"I'll say he is," Jack puffed, turning the handle with all his strength.

"And it's a white, sure as guns," Captain Ole told him. "I don't as a rule like to see a thing killed just for the sake of killing, but when it comes to a white shark, the more of them you kill the better, I say. They're killers of the worst sort. One of them almost got me once, and I've had a grudge against them ever since. I'll tell you the story sometime."

Jack had been reeling in rapidly while the captain was talking, and now had nearly half the line in again. He could tell that the big fish was tiring rapidly, but it was not dead yet, and another rush again took out thirty or forty feet. But this was the last battle, and Jack had the fish up to within twenty feet of the boat when Mr. Lakewood reappeared with a rifle in his hands.

"You a good shot, Bob?" he asked.

"Nothing extra," Bob grinned.

"Well, have a try," Mr. Lakewood said, handing him the gun.

"Where's the best place to hit?" Bob asked as he took the rifle from his uncle's hand.

"When he turns, get him just above his mouth," Captain Ole advised.

The fish was now making but feeble struggles to escape and was turning, every minute or two so as to expose its huge mouth, and Bob could not repress a shudder as he caught sight of the rows of needle sharp teeth. Awaiting a favorable moment he fired and the big fish, with a last effort, threw itself from the water, and then fell back.

"You got him all right," Captain Ole assured him.

"But what'll we do with him?" Bob asked.

"Well, the only part of him that's really worth anything is the oil in his head," the captain replied slowly. Then, turning to the sailors, he said. "You boys want to pull him up and get the oil? You can have it if you do and maybe you'll get fifty dollars worth, maybe more."

"You bet," was the immediate and unanimous response.

"All right, then. You'll have to rig a tackle up forward where the mess can be cleaned up easily.

The tackle was soon arranged, and the captain ordered the boat stopped long enough to allow the men to pull the huge fish from the water.

"He sure is some minnie, as Cap't Ole said," Bob grinned as the shark came over the side and, a mo-

ment later was stretched out on the forward deck.

"Twenty-six feet and three inches," Captain Ole announced a few minutes after he had measured the fish. "You'd have lost that bet, Josh," he added turning to the second mate who was watching him closely.

"He's bigger nor I thought," he acknowledged.

"I'll bet that fellow hates his own shadow," Jack whispered to Bob as they leaned against the rail watching the sailors as they cut a hole in the shark's head, the exact spot being indicated by Captain Ole.

"He sure does nurse a mean grouch," Bob agreed.

About two quarts of a clear light yellow oil was dipped from the cavity in the shark's head and then the carcass was thrown overboard.

"What's that oil good for?" Jack asked Captain Ole.

"They use it to oil watches and fine clocks," the captain told him. "You see it's an oil that won't gum."

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICIONS.

"LAND, ho!"

It was several days after the catching of the shark, and the boys were eating breakfast alone when they heard the call. Leaving their unfinished meal they rushed out of the cabin and hurried to the bridge, where they found their uncle and Captain Ole, the former gazing through a large pair of field glasses.

"Is it it?" Bob asked eagerly.

"I'm not sure but, unless I'm off my reckoning, it ought to be," his uncle smiled as he handed the glass to the captain.

During the past three days they had sighted several islands, most of them small, but one or two of considerable size. Early in the voyage Mr. Lakewood had explained that his plan was to proceed to the island which he had reached in the open boat so many years before, and which, he told them, was the most northerly of the group called The Marquesas Islands, and which were owned by the French. This Island was of considerable size; and being a coaling station, he was sure that they would be able to lay

in a fresh supply of fuel oil. From there they would set out on the search for the Island of Pearls, as they had come to call it, and which, he was quit sure, was not shown on any map.

"That's the island," Mr. Lakewood assured them a few minutes later. "I remember those two low hills which you can see just a little way in from the shore."

"Looks as though we were expected," Jack declared. "Look at the crowd down there by the wharf."

"It's quite an event for a boat to come in," his uncle told him.

"You're sure they're peaceful?" Bob asked a bit anxiously, as the boat came near enough for him to see the dark skins and scanty attire of the natives.

"You're not afraid, are you?" Mr. Lakewood asked in a tone of surprise.

"No," Bob told him. "I'm not afraid only, you know, I always had an idea that I'd make pretty good soup and——"

"Don't let him razz you, Uncle," Jack interrupted. "When you see Bob afraid you can know there's something to be afraid of."

By this time the boat was only a few yards away from the long flimsy looking pier, which reached out some fifty feet into the sea and Pat rang to reverse, and a moment later, her side brushed the end of the

structure and a half dozen, all but naked, natives eagerly caught the line thrown them by one of the deck hands. Scarcely was the boat tied up, when a short pompous appearing man, clad in a somewhat soiled suit of white duck, pushed his way through the crowd.

"Welcome," he shouted as soon as he had reached the edge of the wharf.

"Thanks," Mr. Lakewood smiled as he stepped ashore and grasped the man's outstretched hand.

From the deference paid him by the natives, the boys judged that the white clad man must be the head man of the island or, at least, someone high in authority. A moment later their uncle introduced them, and, somewhat to their surprise, they learned that Mr. Umgubsolongas spoke almost perfect English with only the faintest trace of a soft slightly slurring accent.

"I am very much pleased to have the honor of welcoming you to my poor island," he told them as he took each by the hand, "and all that I have is yours."

The boys eagerly assured him that the pleasure was mutual, and their uncle invited him aboard, an invitation which he readily accepted, and, after they had shown him over the boat, they sat down to a meal which Mr. Lakewood had cautioned Wong to make particularly good. Their guest proved an ex-

cellent conversationalist and, before the meal was finished, the boys knew more about the lives and habits of the people of the South Sea Islands than they could have gotten from books in a long time.

"You must be my guests for the evening meal," Mr. Umgubsolongas told them when, finally, they pushed back their chairs. "Of course," he added, "I cannot hope to equal your most splendid hospitality but I hope to offer you a dish or two which will, at least, be new to you."

For an hour they chatted beneath an awning on the forward deck and then their guest took his departure, after promising to call for them at six o'clock.

"And you must bring your captain with you," was his parting word.

"Afraid he'll eat you, Bob?" Mr. Lakewood chuckled as the native disappeared amid the crowd which still thronged the pier.

"He seems fine, all right, but you never can tell," Bob replied with a smile.

"He's a prince," Jack declared.

"King, rather," his uncle corrected him.

"But I thought this island belonged to the French."

"So it does, but they all have a king just the same."

"But who would have thought of finding so well educated a man on one of these islands," Bob said.

"Most of their head men are more or less ed-

ucated," his uncle told him. "I imagine you'll find that fellow has been to school and maybe to college in England or France."

"How long are you going to stay here?" Jack asked.

"Not more than a couple of days, I reckon."

"Did you ask him if we could get oil?" Bob asked.

"No, but I will tonight. I'm pretty certain we can."

"Suppose we can't?" Jack asked.

"Then we'll have to load on some coal. We can burn coal as well as oil, you know. By the way, if you want to see some real swimming and diving go over to the rail and throw a dime in the water."

There were perhaps twenty boys, naked save for a loin cloth, sitting on the edge of the wharf as the two boys reached the railing at a point some ten feet away from the side of the pier.

"Some of them look almost white," Jack whispered as they gazed at them.

"But their oval faces, wide nostrils and large ears stamp them as Polynesians all right," Bob whispered back.

"But some of them are not bad looking at that."

"I'll say they aren't. Look at that fellow the third from the end. Dress him up in evening clothes and he'd pass for a gentleman anywhere."

As he spoke Bob took a bright new quarter from

his pocket, and held it up. Instantly the native boys sprang to their feet, their sharp eyes fixed on the coin. With a smile Bob threw the money some twenty feet out from the side of the boat and, although he did not throw it very high, Jack afterward declared, that every mother's son of them was in the water before the coin had disappeared. The race to the spot where the coin had disappeared was a matter of a moment only, and then the entire crowd disappeared. One by one the curly heads reappeared and soon one held up his hand and showed the coin.

"Good boy," Bob shouted as he threw a dime into their midst.

This time they remained below the surface longer than before, and the boys were beginning to wonder if they were ever coming up, when the boy, Bob had pointed out to Jack, shot out of the water and held up the coin. Followed more coins and for the better part of an hour the boys amused themselves watching them dive.

"I'll be bankrupt if we keep this up much longer," Jack finally said.

"I'll let them have this last dime," Bob replied as he threw the coin.

"They sure are at home in the water," Jack said as they turned away from the rail.

"Well, I reckon they about live in it."

"No doubt."

"Did you get a run for your money?" Mr. Lakewood smiled as they rejoined him.

"Sure did, and the other fellows had a dive for it," Jack laughed.

"They're probably the best swimmers and divers in the world," Mr. Lakewood told them.

"But I'd like to see Jack try one of them on a long swim," Bob said.

"He'd be licked before they started. Those boys think nothing of swimming ten miles or more."

"Don't the sharks ever get them?" Jack asked.

"Not often. You see, they very seldom come in so close as this and when they swim outside they carry a knife in a belt and if a shark attacks them he usually gets the worse of the argument."

It was exactly six o'clock when they saw a Ford touring car drive down the beach to the wharf, and their newly made friend stepped out and came toward the boat. They met him before he had reached the end of the wharf and he once more shook hands with them all, including Captain Ole who, somewhat against his wishes, had been persuaded to accompany them.

"I deeply regret that I have not a more luxurious car to offer you," the native apologized as he led the way.

"They get you there and bring you back," Mr. Lakewood smiled.

The home of the king of the island proved to be a large affair when compared with the others of the village. Built almost entirely of bamboo it contained several rooms, including a large comfortably furnished living room, as well as a commodious dining room. The meal was very good, consisting of many courses, several of which were entirely new to the boys. But they liked them all, and afterward agreed that they had never eaten a better dinner. At eleven o'clock they were driven back to the boat more pleased than ever with their host.

"He says we can get all the oil we want," Mr. Lakewood told them, as they parted for the night shortly before twelve o'clock. "We'll spend tomorrow getting stocked up and be off early the next morning."

Filling the oil tanks took the best part of the next day, as the oil was brought out to the boat in buckets by the natives. After watching them for some time in the morning, the boys decided they would take a walk about the village and, after being cautioned against getting into trouble by their uncle, they started off shortly before ten o'clock. There was much to interest them in the quaint settlement, and the time passed so rapidly that they were surprised when Bob's watch told them that it was high noon.

"We'll be late to dinner," Bob said. "Wonder how far we are from the wharf."

"Can't be more'n a half mile, I reckon."

"Well, come on, we'll have to hustle to get back on time and you know how much Wong likes to have us late for a meal."

"About as much as I like castor oil," Jack laughed as they turned down a side street thinking to take a short cut back.

"Sure this is the way?" Bob asked a moment later.

"I'm pretty sure of the general direction. We can't miss it very much I reckon," Jack replied.

They had walked rapidly for several minutes, turning a number of corners and had just come in sight of the ocean, when Bob suddenly caught hold of Jack's arm.

"What's up?" Jack asked.

"S-s-s-s-h," Bob whispered. "Follow me quietly and don't speak."

Mystified at his brother's action but never doubting, but that he had a good reason for it, Jack fell in behind and followed close at his heels. About a hundred feet in front of them was a large low building, constructed of bamboo with a thatched roof and as they reached the corner on which it stood, Bob paused and held up his hand. Jack stopped and wondered what was going to happen next. Bob pressed his body close to the side of the building and Jack did the same. In a moment he heard a voice

which he recognized and the meaning of Bob's move was partly solved.

"You understand?"

It was Josh Kelly speaking.

"I get you all right, but are you sure you have the right dope?"

The reply was in a voice strange to Jack and he strained his ears to catch Josh's next words.

"Oh, I've got the dope all right. If you do as I say, everything will go off all right."

"I'll play my part all right, don't you fret yourself about that."

"Sure you understand?"

"Sure's shooting."

"Then I'll have to hurry back. See you later."

"So long."

That was the end of the conversation and, after waiting a few minutes they started again for the boat. Josh was not in sight as they stepped around the corner nor did they see anyone who, they thought, could have been his companion.

"That was Josh Kelley," Jack declared.

"Sure it was," Bob assured him. "I saw him come out of that shed there and turn the corner. That's why I stopped."

"Sure he didn't see us?"

"I wasn't at first, but if he had, I guess he wouldn't have been talking to that other fellow."

"Probably not."

"What do you make of it?"

"Search me."

"He's up to something."

"Looks that way."

"And it must be something shady."

"Shouldn't wonder. It seems funny he should know anyone here."

"Especially as he never mentioned it on the boat."

"The plot thickens," Jack quoted.

"And there's no knowing how thick it may be," Bob added.

By this time they had reached the end of the wharf and, for a moment, Bob stood looking at the boat.

"Think we ought to tell uncle?" he asked.

"I don't think, I know," Jack replied decisively.

"It can't possibly do any harm, and it may save a lot of trouble."

"Just what I was thinking," Bob agreed as he stepped onto the pier.

There was no one in sight when they stepped on board, except a couple of the sailors, and the boys hurried to the dining salon where they found Wong clearing away the dishes from the table. There was no one else in the room.

"You tlink you gleet dinner now, you have velly well one more tlink coming," he greeted them.

"We're awful sorry, Wong," Bob began, but Wong interrupted.

"No use be solly now. Dinner velly well over."

"But, Wong, old man, we're starving," Jack gave him his most enticing smile.

"You no stlarve till supper."

"But we might, and then think how you'd feel," Bob too smiled.

"Wong no feel velly bad," he grinned.

"Now you know that's not true," Jack told him.

"Come, just give us a little bite, that's a good fellow."

"No blite."

"But, Wong——"

"No blut. Dinner velly well over," and he started out of the room with the last of the dishes.

"Guess he means it," Jack whispered.

"'Fraid so," Bob replied.

But just as he reached the door he turned back.

"You slit down. Mebby gleet leetle blite," he grinned over his shoulder.

"I knew he was fooling," Jack sighed as he sat down.

"Yes, I did—not," Jack grinned.

"Wonder where uncle and Captain Ole are," Bob said a moment later.

"Guess they're not very far off."

"They can't have been through dinner very long."

"We'll hunt them up as soon as we get something to eat. It wouldn't do to leave the room now."

"I'll say it wouldn't."

Just then Wong returned bearing a large tray filled with dishes piping hot.

"Wong, you old fraud, you saved our dinner for us," Bob said as he sat the tray down.

"Mellican boy no deserve it," he grinned placing the food on the table before them.

"I'll say we don't," Jack agreed. "But you're one good scout."

"You no velly bad boys," Wong conceded.

Just as they were finishing Mr. Lakewood entered the room.

"So Wong saved you something after all," he smiled.

"I'll say he did," Jack told him.

"He declared by all his gods that he wouldn't."

"And he really convinced us that he hadn't," Bob told him.

"I thought all the time he would. What did you think of the town?"

"Good what there is of it and plenty of it as 'tis," Jack replied.

"We couldn't find an ice cream store, that's what's the trouble with him," Bob laughed.

"Well, you said yourself that you wouldn't want to spend the rest of your life here," Jack retorted.

"By the way, we had a bit of an adventure," Bob said and proceeded to tell his uncle what they had overheard.

"You're sure it was Josh?" he asked when he had finished.

"There's no doubt about that," Bob assured him.

"Then it looks bad."

"What do you think he's up to?" Jack asked.

"Haven't an idea."

"But you think he's up to something shady?" Bob asked.

"It looks that way to me. By the way, are you sure he wasn't talking to one of the crew?"

"Pretty sure," Bob told him. "Of course we didn't see the fellow but his voice was strange to me."

"And to me too," Jack added.

"I've never trusted the fellow, though I couldn't say why," Mr. Lakewood mused.

"What'll you do?" Jack asked.

"Nothing."

"But——"

"Think a minute and you'll see that we haven't enough to go on. If we accused him of crooked work he'd deny it, of course, and he could easily make up a plausible story to explain it."

"I suppose you're right."

"Of course I am. No, the only thing to do is to

keep a close eye on him. I'll tell Ole and put him on his guard. After all, you know, it may not be anything that concerns us."

"But you think it is?" Bob asked.

"I almost know it is."

"But not quite, eh?" Jack grinned.

"Exactly. Now, don't let Josh know you suspect him," he cautioned them as he rose and led the way out on deck.

The natives had resumed their work of filling the oil tanks, but by three o'clock the task was completed and Mr. Lakewood announced that he and the captain had decided to put to sea at once and not wait until morning. "Kind of too bad not to say goodbye to the king," he added. "But we told him we might leave this afternoon and he said he'd try to come down."

"And there he is now," Jack announced pointing to the shore.

The old Ford ran down close to the end of the wharf and then stopped with a suddenness which nearly threw the driver through the windshield. Jumping out of the car the king ran down to the boat and leaped aboard.

"I was afraid you might be gone before I could get here," he gasped as he held out his hands for them to grasp.

Followed an hour of pleasant conversation during

which the king urged them to remain longer as his guests but, finding that they were determined to leave, he finally bade them goodbye about four o'clock and, insisting that they make him another visit sometime, he cranked up the Ford and disappeared up the street in a cloud of dust.

"Gee, but he did his best, short of asking outright, to find out where we're going," Jack declared as they turned back to the boat.

"I'll say he did," Bob agreed, "but I reckon it was nothing but curiosity."

"Which same killed the cat, you know," Jack reminded him.

"Look here, son, don't you go getting suspicious of everybody. Pretty soon you'll be watching me," Bob grinned.

"Maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea at that."

An hour later they pulled out and, after running south until the island was out of sight, swung in a wide circle until they were headed north.

"Just as well not to let them know which way we're going," Mr. Lakewood explained as he stood with the boys on the bridge.

"Does the second mate know what we're after?" Jack asked.

"Not unless he's overheard something," his uncle told him. "We three and Captain Ole are the only

ones in the secret so far as I know. But he may be wise at that."

"How far away do you think that island is?" Bob asked.

"I haven't much idea. When I took that trip I wasn't in a condition to notice much of anything especially during the last part of it, and I may have come a hundred miles and then again it may be nearer five hundred. We're simply to hunt until we find it. I know it's around here somewhere, and I reckon we'll strike it sooner or later."

"But aren't we likely to pass it in the night?" Jack asked.

"We're going to anchor as soon as it is dark, provided it's not too deep and if it is we'll just drift.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTURED BY SAVAGES.

"SHE's all out and still banging."

It was after supper and then the sun had sunk, a huge red ball of fire, below the western horizon. Captain Ole made the announcement as the boys and their uncle, together with three or four of the sailors, stood watching the big chain run out.

"Then I reckon we'll have to let her drift," Mr. Lakewood said as the captain gave the signal to raise the anchor. "I don't really think that we're anywhere near the place yet," he whispered to Bob, who was standing close at his side, "but we don't want to take any chances. There's so little wind that we won't go far."

"Well, guess we might's well go in and send a picture to the folks at home," Jack said as the anchor appeared.

Every night they had turned on the machine for a few minutes but, to their great disappointment, they had failed to receive any results from far away Maine.

"Not time for more'n an hour yet," Bob said looking at his watch.

Some time in the night Jack awoke. This was such an unusual occurrence that for some moments he lay awake and wondered what had disturbed him. He could not hear a sound save the gentle lap of the water against the side of the boat and the regular breathing of his brother. And yet he knew that something was wrong. He reached beneath his pillow and brought out his tiny flashlight and a glance at his watch told him that it was twenty-five minutes past one.

"Guess I'm getting the heebie-jeebies," he thought as he slipped from his bunk and, in his bare feet, stole toward the door.

He opened it without making the slightest sound and stepped outside. It was a beautiful night and, although there was no moon, the stars, which thickly studded the sky, rendered it far from dark. For a full three minutes he stood there, close to the door of his cabin, and listened. Was Bob right, he wondered, when he told him he was getting too suspicious? Finally, hearing no sound which could, in any way, be construed as being mysterious, he decided to make a tour of the boat before going back to bed.

"Reckon I'm an idiot all right, but I'm going to take a look about, just the same," he muttered, as he started slowly toward the stern.

The night was so warm that he was perfectly comfortable in his light pajamas, and the floor felt delightfully cool to his bare feet. Not a sound did he make as he stole along, keeping close to the side of the cabins where it was darker than over by the railing. Suddenly a slight sound reached his ears, and he stopped. Had he really heard anything, or were his suspicions getting the better of his judgment? The sound was not repeated, and he was about to move on again, when a spot of light, from far out across the water, caught his eye. It glimmered an instant, and then disappeared, to reappear a moment later in a series of flashes. Was it a signal? It seemed hardly possible, but it certainly looked very much like it.

He crept on, until he reached the end of the cabins, and was but a few feet from the stern of the boat. Cautiously he peeped around the corner, and his heart gave an extra beat, as he saw a figure standing only a matter of six or seven feet from him. It was too dark for him to distinguish the man's features, even had his face been turned toward him, but the tall lanky figure left no doubt in his mind as to his identity. It was Josh Kelley, and he was up to something, for he raised his right hand, and a flash of light sprang out.

"It was a signal all right," he thought, as he shrank back, fearful lest the man see him.

What should he do? He knew now that his suspicions, as well as those of his uncle, were confirmed. The second mate was in league with someone, and was signaling to him, or to them. But what was the object? Did he know of their quest? These and many more questions flashed through his mind as he stood there, watching that twinkling light, which came and went in answer to the mate's signal. At first he thought they might be signaling in the Morse code, and tried to read the flashes, but he could make nothing of them. If they were using a code, it was not one with which he was familiar, that was certain.

He had made up his mind to wake his uncle, and had taken a couple of backward steps, when the light from a powerful flash struck him full in the face.

"Wot's the idea?"

It was evident that the mate was mad, and for an instant the boy was too startled to reply.

"I—I reckon I might ask you the same question," he finally stammered.

"Wot yer mean?"

"Who are you signaling to?"

"Who said I was signaling?"

"I saw you."

Almost instantly the mate's expression changed and the look of anger, which had been plain even in the dim light, was replaced by an uneasy smile.

"Oh, yer mean that flashlight?"

"Sure."

"Wal, I gess mebbly I was signalin' kind of. That is yer might call it that, but, bless yer heart, I dunno who it was I was signalin' to."

"But he answered you," Jack insisted.

"You saw him?"

"Sure."

"Wal, yer know jest as much as I do who it was. Yer see, it's like this. It's my watch an' I was looking out back here when I saw that flash out there. Three or four times I saw it an' then, seein' as how I had this thing with me, I thot as how I'd jest answer it an' I did. That's all I know about it."

"I see."

Jack knew that the man was lying, but he also knew that, at present, he was powerless to prove it.

"Wot yer doin' out here this time o' night?" the mate asked suddenly, the stern look coming back to his face.

"Oh, I woke up and, as it was pretty hot in the cabin, I though I'd get a little fresh air," Jack replied easily.

"Hum, then yer didn't hear nothin'?"

"Why, no, not till I got out here and heard you."

"Hum."

"Who do you suppose it is out there?" Jack asked as the light flashed again.

"Bless yer, how should I know?"

"Let me take the light a minute."

"Wot fur?"

"I want to answer him."

"Fur wot?"

"Just for fun."

"All right."

He handed over the light and Jack flashed the message in Morse, "W-H-O A-R-E Y-O-U?" But there was no answering flashes and, after waiting a few minutes, the mate asked:

"Did yer send a message?"

"Asked them who they were, but I guess they don't know either," Jack told him.

"Mebby they don't understand that code."

"Maybe not."

"I reckon that's it. Probably it's jest some fishermen becalmed out there."

"You may be right."

"Sure I am."

"Well, I guess I'll be getting back to bed," Jack said with a deep yawn.

The mate made no reply, and he walked slowly back to his cabin conscious that the man was watching his every move. He felt that he ought to tell his uncle what he had seen without delay, but he knew that unless he went at once to his own cabin the mate would know what he was going to do. So, as he reached his door, he pushed it quickly open and,

without glancing behind him, went in. Bob was still sleeping and he got into bed again without waking him. But, for a long time, he could not sleep. Not that he thought there was any immediate danger. Whoever it was that the mate was in league with, they would hardly make an attack on them until they learned where they were going, and something in regard to their plans. That the man was a villian he felt sure, and he was in no less certain that he was a deep and crafty one. Finally he slept and the sun was streaming in at the window when he again awoke. Bob, he saw, was fully dressed.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"After seven."

"We under way?"

"Sure. You didn't think we'd stay drifting around all day, did you?"

"Huh, I suppose you've been up several hours."

"Not so many," Bob laughed. "But hurry or we'll be late to breakfast and our rating with Wong isn't very high just now, you know."

Jack was already dressing and by the time he had finished he had told Bob what he had seen in the night.

"What do you know about that?" Bob said, when he had concluded the account.

"Not much," Jack confessed.

"Of course he was lying."

"You think so?"

"I don't think, I know he was."

"He's a scamp all right."

"You really think so?"

"Oh, cut out the kidding and come along to breakfast. We must tell uncle as soon as possible."

They found their uncle in the dining room just finishing his breakfast and, as he was alone, they at once told him.

"It surely confirms our suspicions," Mr. Lakewood said when they had finished.

"But does it help any?" Bob asked.

"I can't really see that it does," his uncle confessed after a moment's thought."

"Was there any boat in sight when you got up?" Jack asked.

"Not a sign of one."

"Well, I wish he'd been a few minutes later when we started," Bob said. "Then we wouldn't have been bothered with him."

"But there's no use wishing," Jack declared. "We've got him and the only question is what are we going to do with him?"

"That's it, what are we going to do with him?" his uncle repeated.

"If we could only prove something against him," Bob mused.

"Perhaps we can later," Jack told him.

"But later may be too late."

"Well, there's no use hanging crepe all over the boat about it," Jack grinned. "I'm going to keep a close watch on him and, mark my word, I'll get him where the hair's short if he gives me half a chance."

"Sometimes chances have to be made," Mr. Lakewood said drily.

"And maybe I can do that too," Jack responded.

"Well, about the only thing I can do now is to tell Cap'n Ole about it and put him on his guard, although I think he's watching him pretty closely already," their uncle said, as he pushed back his chair and, followed by the boys, went out on deck.

"We're going to run nor'east for about fifty miles and then tack back nor'west and keep a-zizzaging back and forth that way so as to cover a pretty big area," he explained as they paused for a moment at the foot of the stairway leading to the bridge.

"Seems to me that ought to hit it," Bob told him.

But all that day they sighted no land, and when darkness came they were again unable to anchor owing to the depth of the water. Mr. Lakewood had told the captain about Jack's adventure, and he had advised taking Pat Barney into their confidence and telling him where they were going and their object.

"Pat's true blue and, what's more, he's sharp. He

has a good chance to keep an eye on the snake, and he'll do it if he knows he's up to something crooked."

So, at the first opportunity he had told Pat all about the trip, and had confided to him their suspicions in regard to the second mate.

"Faith an' it's meself as niver did loike the face uv him," Pat had declared.

It was Pat's watch on deck that night from twelve until six and he assured them that he would see that there was no signaling done while he was on the job. Unlike the previous night, the wind was blowing fairly hard from the west, although the night was clear and the captain told them that they would have to keep the engine going to avoid being blown back.

"But we won't make more'n two or three miles an hour, so I reckon we won't pass anything," he assured them.

The night passed without incident, and when the boys went on deck shortly after six o'clock the captain told them that they had not made more than a dozen knots during the night. The wind still held strong from the west and there was enough of a sea to make the Valkyrie "kick up her heels," as Jack put it.

They were eating dinner when they heard the lookout shout "Land ho" and there was a scramble to see who would reach the deck first. Jack won and,

as he burst out from the room, he heard the mate cry :
"Off the port bow, sir."

He could see nothing from the deck and hurried to the bridge closely followed by the others.

"Right off there," the second mate told him pointing.

"I see it now," he replied turning to Bob who had reached his side.

"Looks pretty small from here," Bob said as he stepped into the wheel-house for the glasses.

He was out again in a minute with the glasses in his hand and handed them to his uncle, who by this time, had also reached the bridge. Mr. Lakewood gazed for a long time before he took the glass from his eyes.

"It's too far away to be sure but I hardly think it's the place," he said as he handed them to Bob.

The remainder of the breakfast was forgotten as they watched the land as it seemed to rise higher and higher from the water and pretty soon Wong appeared at the foot of the stairway.

"You goin' catch um some bleakfast?" he shouted.

"How about it, boys?" Mr. Lakewood laughed.

"I had enough," both replied in the same breath.

"Then you can clear away, Wong," he told him.

"All light," and Wong shuffled away a look of keen disgust on his yellow face.

"Wong's slighted now," Captain Ole laughed.

"And I don't blame him," Bob declared. "But I just can't leave the bridge now."

At the end of another hour Mr. Lakewood was able to say that he was almost certain that it was not the island.

"Of course," he added, "I may be mistaken, but I don't think so. It's too large in the first place and then again it's too low at the near end."

"Suppose we land anyway," Captain Ole suggested. "I think I can see a grove of trees not far inland and perhaps we can get some cocoanuts."

"Sure we'll land," Mr. Lakewood agreed. "Do you know," he added with a smile, "it was several years after I got away from that island before I could bear the sight of a cocoanut, but that's gone now and I really like them again."

"Then we'll sure get you some," Jack laughed.

"No, that's not the place," Mr. Lakewood declared definitely a little later, as the island now loomed up large before them. "Think it's inhabited, Cap'n?" he asked turning to Captain Ole.

"Don't see any signs of anything that looks like it on this side, but you never can tell about these places. Some of the tribes on these islands don't go in much for architecture and a cocoanut tree will hide a whole lot of 'em."

As the captain had said, there was no sign that the island was inhabited. The low lying beach

stretched back, with only a gentle rise, for a distance of some hundred yards, where it met a long line of trees which, the captain assured them, were coconut trees. What was beyond they could not see. A few minutes later and the Valkyrie swung at anchor at the mouth of a narrow cove where the water was only about twenty feet deep.

"See that the second mate goes ashore with us," Mr. Lakewood whispered to Captain Ole, as the latter was about to give the order to lower one of the small boats.

Leaving the boat in charge of the first mate, the two boys together with their uncle, Captain Ole, and Josh Kelley and two of the sailors, were soon standing on the beach.

"Bring those two baskets along," the captain ordered the sailors, as he led the way toward the grove of trees.

"Look at the nuts, will you?" Jack shouted as they stood beneath the trees. "I reckon it won't take us long to fill the baskets. Wait a minute and I'll climb up and shake some down."

He was up one of the largest of the trees almost before he had finished speaking, and soon the big nuts began to fall, and in less than fifteen minutes they had filled the baskets.

"We should have brought more baskets," Jack declared regretfully.

"Those two were all we had," the mate told him.

"You two," the captain said turning to the two sailors, "take these nuts to the ship, and then bring the baskets back. We'll help you carry them down to the beach."

"Let's see how far this grove goes," Bob said a moment later after he had jumped to the ground.

"Atta boy," Jack agreed.

"You look out you don't get lost," their uncle warned them.

"We won't. We'll be back by the time they get back with the baskets," Bob assured him.

The cocoanut trees came to an end before they had gone a hundred feet and they found themselves on the edge of a narrow ravine on the other side of which the land was too high for them to see beyond.

"Let's go up to the top of that hill and see what we can see from there," Jack suggested.

"Think we'll have time?"

"Sure. They won't be back for a half hour at least."

"All right, but make it snappy."

But they were unable to hurry, as the ravine was filled with a peculiar long grass, the edges of which were as sharp as a knife blade and they were obliged to be careful to avoid being cut. But finally, panting and wringing with perspiration, they reached the top of the hill, only to find that another ravine and another hill beyond again shut off their view.

"All that for nothing," Bob panted as he threw himself down on the ground.

"Can't we go on?" Jack asked.

"Not on your life. We've been gone nearly half an hour and uncle'll be worried if we don't get back pronto."

"All right, then, let's beat it."

Bob got to his feet and they were about to start back when, without the least warning, a dozen men seemed to rise from nowhere all about them. They were small brown men dressed in nothing except a wide fringe of some kind of grass about the waist. Their faces and the upper part of their bodies were profusely painted with grotesque figures, making them appear most hideous. They were unarmed save for a thin reed about six feet long which each man carried in his right hand. But both boys had read accounts of the dreaded blow-pipes and recognized them as the most formidable of weapons. One slight prick from their tiny darts and they knew that it was death.

"Mind your step," Bob whispered.

For a moments the brown men had stood still gazing at them as though undecided what to do. Then one, a man slightly larger than the others and evidently their leader, advanced a few steps and said something in a language they were unable to understand. Bob shook his head and smiled although, as he after-

ward declared, it was the last thing he felt like doing. The native repeated his statement this time in louder tones and seemed angry when Bob again shook his head.

"Reckon he wants us to go down the hill," Jack said in low tones.

"Bob smiled again at the man and pointed down the hill away from the boat.

"Ugg," the man grunted.

"I reckon he understands and means yes," Bob said. "So, come on and be careful and don't do anything to make them mad. You know what those tubes are."

"Reckon I'm hep," Jack groaned as he fell into step beside his brother.

The natives formed a semicircle about them and, with many gesticulations, urged them on.

"We're in a mess," Jack whispered.

"Looks that way."

"What do you think?"

"Can't tell. Have to wait and see."

"How in the world do they get through this stuff in their bare feet without getting cut all to pieces.

"Guess they must be tough."

"And then some."

For some time they pushed their way through the thick sharp grass being constantly urged to make more haste by their captors who seemed not to have

the slightest difficulty of locomotion. Finally they reached the top of the next hill all but exhausted, although Bob cautioned Jack against showing it any more than he could help. A short distance in front of them they saw a grove of cocoanut trees and toward it their captors urged them.

"Guess we've got there," Jack said as he saw a number of children playing about the trees.

"Looks that way," Bob agreed.

Just beyond the grove was the village of the tribe, consisting of about a dozen huts of bamboo shaped not unlike an Indian teepee. Several women, dressed like their captors except that their grass girdles were somewhat wider, sat or lay on the ground most of them engaged in weaving grass into what seemed to be large mats. As the party approached, the children flocked about them looking in amazement at the two boys. But they were roughly brushed away by the men who seemed to begrudge them even a look at their prisoners. The women gave little sign that they were aware of the presence, although the boys could see that they were casting sly glances at them.

The leader pointed to one of the huts which was located in the center of the group and made them understand that they were to get inside and they meekly obeyed. The hut was about a dozen feet in diameter and the peak of it some fifteen feet from the

ground. The ground inside was nearly covered with the grass mats but they were all it contained.

"What a mess," Jack groaned as he sank back.

"Never say die," Bob consoled him. "I've seen sicker cats than this get well."

"Maybe, but you'll have to acknowledge that this is an awful sick one."

"This must be a small tribe if this is all there is to it."

"But it's big enough. Got a gun with you?"

"Yes, have you?"

"Sure. How about fighting our way out?"

"It would be suicide."

"Why would it? We've got two guns and six shots in each."

"But they've got those blamed pipes, and one of them would be sure to get us before we could get them all, and you know what the least prick from one of their dart means. I'd rather face them if they were armed with guns. You'd have a show then, even if you got hit, but with those things you haven't."

It was indeed a desperate situation, and both the boys were fully aware of their peril. But they knew that there was One who had the power to save them, and, at a nod from Jack, Bob got to his knees and sent up an earnest petition, that, if it was His will their lives might be spared.

CHAPTER VII.

SAVED BY MAGIC.

"THAT sure helps," Jack declared, as Bob finished his prayer.

"I hope uncle and the others won't try to find us right away."

"How come?"

"Because someone'll get killed if they do."

"But you know they will. They're probably on their way here right now."

"That's what I'm afraid of."

"Think they'll find us right off?"

"I don't know. We aren't very far away, you know, but that grass is so lodged in all sorts of ways that I don't know's they'll be able to pick up our trail."

"But they'll find us sooner or later."

"Sure they will and then there'll be a fight."

"But they must know about the blow-pipes, don't you think?"

"Sure they do, and I reckon they'll be careful."

For some moments they were silent, each busy

with his own thoughts. It was quiet outside for the most part, although they could now and then hear the sound of jabbering. After that seemed a long time, but in reality was not more than an hour from the time they had arrived, the leader stuck his head into the hut and motioned for them to come out.

"I've got an idea," Bob whispered as they got to their feet. "Be careful and don't start anything."

"What you going to do?" Jack asked anxiously.

"No time to tell you now. Watch and you'll see."

As they emerged from the hut, they saw the group of native men sitting on the ground in the form of a circle a short distance away, and toward them the man urged them.

"Council of war, I reckon," Jack whispered.

"Likely. Watch your step," Bob again cautioned.

Into the midst of the circle the native pushed them and they noticed that the women of the tribe were gathered a short distance away eagerly watching the proceedings. Jack's mind was busy, wondering what Bob was going to do and he did not have long to wait before finding out. Once they were within the circle, the leader took his place beside one of the others and at once began jabbering at them making many gestures with both hands. Of course they were unable to understand what he was saying, but, when he paused, Bob held up one hand and Jack saw that, between his thumb and finger, he

held up a bright half dollar. Instantly he knew his plan.

For an instant Bob held the coin so that all the men could see it, at the same time striking an imposing attitude. Then he made as though he was throwing the coin in the air, but instead, it disappeared. A look, first of wonder stole over the faces of the natives, followed by one of uneasiness. Then Bob stepped boldly forward and, with a slow movement picked the coin from the nose of the leader. Now the look of uneasiness changed to one which plainly indicated fear. Catching a wink from his brother Jack also showed signs of amazement.

Bob's next trick was to run quickly here and there within the circle snatching coins from the air until it seemed that he had collected a score or more. Then he paused and looked solemnly at the leader who squirmed and twisted as though expecting to be annihilated the next instant. It was evident that, as Jack afterward declared, he had 'em going. But when Bob next swallowed one of the coins and then, taking off of his shoes, shook it out onto the ground, it was more than they could stand and one or two sprang to their feet. But, with an imperious gesture, Bob motioned them to resume their seat and, tremblingly, they obeyed. Again he looked with his stern gaze at the leader, and again that individual

acted as though he were sitting on a hot stove, as Jack afterward laughed.

Then the leader, as Bob removed his gaze, gave an order and instantly the entire company bowed their heads almost to the ground.

"Good boy, you got 'em on the run all right," Jack chuckled.

"Looks like it," Bob smiled. "Now for the climax."

He strode majestically up to the leader, who sat with his head almost touching the ground, and, seizing him by his long hair, jerked him up until he was sitting upright again.

"And, believe me I wasn't very gentle about it either," he afterward told Jack.

He soon made the leader understand that he was to order the others to sit up and as soon as they had obeyed he turned to Jack.

"See that stump out there?"

"Yep."

"Get a cocoanut and put it on it."

"Don't make a slip," Jack begged.

"I won't. Go ahead."

Jack stepped quickly outside the circle and, after a short search, found one of the nuts and placed it on the stump as Bob had directed. Not for an instant had the eyes of the natives left him but they

made no move to hinder him and he stepped back to Bob's side.

"Go get 'em," he whispered.

Bob, the eyes of every man glued upon him, waved his hand about and finally snatched a coin from the air. Then he reached around and pulled his automatic from his back pocket. He did not know whether or not they had ever seen a firearm and did not much care, for that matter, for he was not depending on it to intimidate them. Now, placing the gun in Jack's hand, he went through the motion of bending the coin and, a moment later, he had apparently dropped it down the barrel of the little gun. Then he slowly raised his left hand pointing toward the stump which was about twenty feet away. But the eyes of the natives never left him until he had repeated the gesture a number of times. Finally his meaning, "soaked through the ivory" as Jack chuckled and they turned their heads. When he was sure they were all looking at the nut, Bob fired.

At the report, a number of the natives fell over backward and lay as though dead, and both boys knew that if they had ever heard a gun discharged before, it must have been a long time ago. Bob waited a moment hardly knowing just how to proceed. Then, one by one, finding that they were not dead, the natives cautiously began to lift their heads

but the boys could see that they were nearly scared to death. Waiting until they were all sitting up again, Bob strode toward the stump and, picking up a rock, he hit the cocoanut a sharp blow. Then, holding it high above his head so that all could see it, he returned and held it out to the leader. That frightened individual shrank back but Bob urged him to take it, and finally he held out a trembling hand. Bob gave him the nut which was already cracked nearly in two and motioned for him to break it open. This he easily did although his hands trembled so that he nearly dropped it.

Holding a half of the nut in each hand the native looked at Bob as though inquiring what he should do next.

"Pour out the milk," Bob ordered making the motion with his hand.

After he had repeated the gesture several times, the native got the idea and cautiously tipped the half in his right hand so the the small amount of white fluid ran out. Then the man's eyes seemed almost to pop from his head for there on the white meat was the shining half dollar.

"Tip it out," Bob ordered, again making the gesture.

As the coin slid to the ground, a loud groan came from the lips of the natives and they again bowed their heads to the earth.

"Here's where we slump," Bob said in a low tone to Jack. "Follow me and, whatever you do, don't show a sign of fear. Walk with your head up."

Slowly and majestically he strode from the circle, closely followed by Jack. Not a man moved as they stepped between them and, as they approached the women, who were a short distance off, they scattered and fled with cries of fear. The boys walked slowly until they were beyond the grove of cocoanut trees and then Bob said:

"Now we want to get a move on. They may have a change of heart."

Down the hill they ran, heedless of the sharp grass which gave their hands many a scratch. But they hardly felt it as they plunged on, eager to put as much distance as possible between them and their erstwhile captors.

Just as they reached the bottom of the ravine they heard a shout.

"That's uncle," Bob said. "But don't answer just yet. Wait till we get to the top of the hill."

They had to go more slowly now, but finally they came to the top and then, as his uncle's shout reached them, Bob replied.

"Where the dickens are you?"

"Coming," Bob shouted back, as they started down the next hillside.

At the edge of the grove of trees they met the others.

"Where in the name of common sense you been," Captain Ole demanded.

"Let's get back to the boat and we'll tell you all about it," Bob replied. "You been looking for us?"

"We've been trying to pick up your trail for about an hour, but in this grass we couldn't find a trace and didn't know which way to start."

"Well, we'd better hurry while the hurrying's good," Jack broke in. "You wanted to know, awhile ago, if this island was inhabited. It is."

"Is what?" Captain Ole demanded.

"Why, inhabited."

"What with?"

"Brown men and—er—brown women and brown children."

"How do you know?"

"We visited them," Bob told him, adding: "But it wasn't a voluntary visit on our part and, if you take my advice, we'd better hurry back to the boat."

"Come on, then," the captain said, leading the way. "I reckon you've got a story and that it'll keep till we get on board."

Picking up the two baskets, which had again been filled with nuts, they hurried to the shore and were soon rowing out to the Valkyrie.

"Now let's have the yarn," Captain Ole demanded when they were safe on board.

"I'll tell it," Bob volunteered.

"Not this time you won't," Jack interrupted him. "I can tell it a whole lot better than you can. Watch me."

Bob subsided, and Jack told them the story, ending with: "I reckon they thought we were gods of some kind."

"It's mighty lucky you had those coins with you," Mr. Lakewood said when he had finished.

"By the way, Bob, how many of them did you have?" Jack asked.

"Only two."

"Great Scott, it looked as though you had a dozen and I wondered where you got them all."

"It would have been easier if I'd had more."

"I thought I'd burst when you took one out of his nib's nose," Jack laughed. "He looked as though he believed he had a mint up in his head and had missed it all his life."

"Well, you were certainly lucky to get out of it so well," their uncle told him. "We must be more careful in the future if we land on any more of these islands."

"What do you suppose they would have done to us?" Bob asked.

"They'd probably have made soup out of you," Jack chuckled.

"And I suppose you think you'd have been better fried," Bob retorted.

"Well, I'm not fat enough to make good soup," Jack laughed.

"I doubt if either of you would have been served up for a meal," Mr. Lakewood broke in. "I hardly think any of these tribes are cannibals now, but it's more than likely that they would have killed you had you not escaped."

"They looked ugly enough to be canibals or anything else for that matter," Jack declared.

As it was now not far from nightfall, it was decided to stay at anchor where they were until morning.

"But we'll have to keep a close watch all night," Captain Ole said. "Those fellows may be only a part of a large tribe and we don't want to be caught napping."

"Not by those fellows, we don't," Bob agreed.

The boys, tired out with the day's adventure, went to bed soon after supper, but it was a long time before either of them could sleep. They were fully aware that they had a very narrow escape, and for an hour or more they talked it all over again. In his prayer that night Bob thanked God that he had spent so many hours in the years past practicing

sleight of hand, for he realized that his proficiency in the art had saved them. It seemed to him that he had hardly fallen asleep when he heard his name called.

"Bob."

"What's up?" he whispered rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Listen."

For an instant he could hear nothing, then, seemingly from a long distance, came a series of peculiar cries.

"What is it?" he asked, sitting up and swinging his feet to the floor.

"Sounds like someone shouting from the island," Jack told him.

"Perhaps we're going to be attacked."

"That's what I was thinking."

"Then I reckon we'd better get into our clothes."

"My sentiments exactly."

In less than two minutes they had slipped into their clothes and were out on deck. The sky was overcast and it was so dark that they could see but a short distance away from the boat.

"Let's go up forward," Bob said. "There ought to be someone on duty there."

The forward deck was illuminated with a single light, but it enabled them to see Pat, who stood close to the rail in an attitude of intentness.

"What is it?" Bob asked as they reached his side.

"Faith an' it's more'n I know."

It was too dark for them to see even the outlines of the island, but that something was going on close to the water's edge was evident from the confused sounds which reached them although faintly.

"There's some natives over there," Jack declared after listening intently for a moment.

"There's something fer a fact," Pat agreed.

"How long have you been hearing them?" Bob asked.

"A matter uv ten minutes or mebby a bit more."

"Sounds to me as though there was a lot of them," Jack declared as the sounds grew louder for an instant.

"Don't you think we'd better call the captain and uncle?" Bob asked.

"It's meself as jest sint one ov the byes to do thot thing," Pat told them.

"Then they'll be here in a minute," Bob said.

"If we could only see a little better," Jack mused as he leaned over the rail.

"Yes, I'd like to know if they have boats," Bob said.

Just then Captain Ole, clad only in trowsers and shirt, joined them.

"What's up?" he asked.

"We think there's a large band of natives on shore," Bob told him.

"There's some sure's I'm a sea dog," the captain agreed after he had listened a moment. "Pat, get all hands up as quick as you can and tell MacDonald to get up steam just as quick as he can. We may want to pull out in a hurry."

"You think they may attack us, sir?" Bob asked as Pat started off on the run.

"Not much doubt of it, I'm thinking."

"And it's what I'm thinking too," agreed Mr. Lakewood, who had joined them unnoticed in the darkness.

"If they got boats they must have come from the other side," Captain Ole said.

The question as to the natives having boats was settled a moment later when Jack's quick ears caught the sound of a slight splash in the water, and, a moment later they saw a long narrow craft, filled with men, emerge from the gloom only a few feet off the port bow.

"Anyone got a gun?" the captain whispered.

No one had and, when he learned that they were all unarmed, he whispered:

Stand back from the rail. If they see us they'll send up a shower of their poisoned darts, and everyone grab a belaying pin. They'll come up on the anchor chain."

Fortunately there was a rack of pins close by and all did as the captain had ordered. It was not so dark but that they could see the bow and for a minute or two they waited for the first sign of hostilities.

"If one of them gets on deck he'll get one or more of us," the captain whispered, "so we mustn't miss him."

As he finished speaking, Bob and Jack spied a woolly head peep up over the bow and instantly two of the heavy pins whirled through the air. The distance was only six feet and both pins reached the mark. Followed a loud and surprised grunt and a loud splash.

"Set 'em up again," Jack whispered.

"Get another pin, quick," Captain Ole ordered.

"You bet."

By this time Pat was back followed by the rest of the crew with the exception of the engineer, who, he explained, was already getting up steam.

"You boys got guns?" Captain Ole asked quietly.

Two or three of the sailors replied in the affirmative and showed the weapons.

"That's good, but don't shoot unless I give the word."

Minute followed minute but no other head showed itself above the railing.

"Think they've left?" Jack whispered to Bob.

"I haven't——" Bob started to reply, but before he could finished Jack had raised his arm and let fly another of the pins.

"Ugg!"

The grunt was followed by a loud splash as the body of the native struck the water.

"Set 'em up again," Bob chuckled. "That was a dandy shot, son. Hit him right between the eyes."

But Jack had darted back for another weapon.

"This beats ten pins all hollow," he laughed as he came back.

"Two strikes in succession isn't so bad," Bob grinned.

"I think they've had enough for the time," Mr. Lakewood said after they had waited several minutes and nothing further had happened.

"They're keeping mighty still about it," Bob declared.

"Listen."

There came a faint splash followed by another and another, growing fainter and fainter until they died out altogether.

"They've gone," Captain Ole announced. "Give 'em a shot now, boys, just to let 'em know we're here, but fire in the air. I don't want to kill anyone if we can help it."

The sailors, with the guns, fired a volley and im-

mediately it was answered by loud yelling from the shore.

"Faith, an' is it scared or mad they are?" Pat asked with a low chuckle.

"Little of both, I reckon," Mr. Lakewood told him.

"See how soon steam'll be up, Pat," the captain ordered.

The mate was back in less than a minute with the word that they could start in five minutes if they wished.

"And I think we'd better, don't you?" the captain said, turning to Mr. Lakewood.

"You think they'll come out again?"

"Can't tell about that. But, the way it looks to me, we've everything to lose and nothing to gain by staying here. It'll be getting light in about an hour."

"I think you're right. Let's start as soon as possible by all means."

"Take the wheel, Mr. Kelley, and you boys be ready to weigh anchor as soon's I give the word," the captain ordered. Then, turning to the boys, he apologized: "Never did like to kill a thing that 'don't know any better. Those heathen think they're doing right to try to kill us, and I suppose it's according to their nature."

"I believe you're right, sir, though I can't say I think much of their belief," Bob responded.

"I'll say it's a right unfortunate belief," Jack chuckled.

Just then the bell sounded, and the captain gave the order to weigh anchor and, a moment later, the Valkyrie swung slowly about and headed away from the island.

"Can't say I'm sorry to bid that place goodbye," Jack said as he leaned over the rail with Bob.

But they were not to say goodbye just then, as it turned out, for, hardly had the boat gone a dozen lengths, when there came a low scraping sound followed by a jerk as the boat came to an abrupt stop.

"Now what?" Jack cried.

"Reckon we're stuck on a bar," Bob replied.

"Back her," they heard the captain shout, and the propeller began to beat the water, at first slowly and then faster until the engine was doing its best. But the boat did not move.

"What do you know about that?" Jack groaned with disgust.

"It's hard luck just as we thought we were safe," Bob replied quietly.

"Stop her, it's no use," they heard the captain order a moment later.

"Well, we're a little farther from the shore any-

how," Jack said, trying to make his voice sound cheerful.

"We'll be all right if those brown devils let us alone," Captain Ole, who joined them at that moment, told them. "We didn't strike hard enough to hurt the boat any, and it's just low tide. She ought to float in a couple of hours."

"But they'll see us before that," Bob said.

"I know it and that's what's worrying me."

"But we've got plenty of guns," Jack suggested.

"And we'll use them if we have to," the captain added.

"Perhaps they have gone off and we won't see anything more of them," Bob said.

But a half hour later, when the first tinge of the coming day reddened the sky, they saw that Bob's hope was vain.

"Gee, there must be a million of them," Jack gasped as their forms began to take shape.

"There are over a hundred at any rate," Bob corrected him. "Enough to give us a lot of trouble if they take into it into their heads to come after us."

"I don't see but a couple of their boats."

"And they won't hold more than eight or ten each," Bob added hopefully.

The two boys were standing near the stern by themselves, the rest being forward where the captain was trying to determine how badly they were

imbedded. They had been to their cabin to get their automatics and had stopped for a view of the shore, as they saw that it was getting light.

"Well, let's go up forward and see what they've found out," Bob suggested.

"Hope we aren't stuck very hard."

"Don't seem as though we could be. We weren't making over two knots an hour when we struck."

"No, I don't think she's in very deep," Captain Ole told them as they met him when they were nearly up to the bow. "And I'm pretty sure she isn't hurt a bit."

As the light increased, it was evident to those on board that the natives were much excited. They were too far away for him to be sure, but Bob fancied that he could recognize in one of them, who seemed to be urging a number of others to some move, the leader of the band which had captured them.

"I tell you there's more than a hundred of those fellows," Jack insisted after it was fully light.

"Yes, I reckon you're right," Bob agreed. "I wouldn't wonder if there was nearer two hundred."

"Better make it three. But what do you suppose they're up to?"

"Seems to me that they're waiting for someone or for something. I've seen a fellow run up to the

top of the hill twice and then run back and make some announcement."

"Hope they aren't waiting for reinforcements."

"Well, they've got to have more boats than two, in order to cause us much trouble, I reckon."

"You boys had better go get some breakfast," Mr. Lakewood, who just then came from the salon told them. "Wong told me to tell you it was ready."

"You had yours?" Bob asked.

"Yes."

"We won't be but a minute," Bob promised. "Come on Jack."

The meal was eaten with a speed which made Wong gasp and predict that they would soon be dead. But they were far too excited to eat slowly, and in less than ten minutes from the time they had left their uncle they were back again.

"Anything new?" Jack asked.

"Not so far's I can see," his uncle told him.

For an hour they stood by the rail watching the natives as they ran this way and that on the shore. Every few minutes one of them would run up to the top of the hill, and then quickly return and make a report to the man who seemed to be the leader.

"I'd give a cent to know what they're waiting for," Jack said.

"Look over there and you can see for less money,"

Bob suddenly cried at the same time pointing toward the end of the island.

"My goodness," Jack gasped. "What do you know about that."

It was little wonder that he was amazed for, sweeping around a point at the extreme end of the island came boat after boat until they had counted twenty of them.

"I reckon that's what they've been waiting for," Mr. Lakewood said quietly. "I suspected it."

"What are we going to do?" Bob asked.

"We've got to get off before they reach us, that's all," his uncle replied a bit grimly.

The boats were about three miles distant when first sighted, and they knew that it would probably take them at least half an hour to reach the Valkyrie even if they came straight.

"They're going to land where the rest are first," Bob said a little later, as he saw the small boats swing in toward the shore.

"All of which helps us," his uncle smiled.

"Gee, but those fellows can paddle," Jack declared. "Look at them cut through the water."

When the boats were within a few hundred yards of the shore, a great shout of welcome rose from the crowd on the beach. As the leading boat struck the sands, a large native sprang out and quickly made his way through the excited crowd until he

had reached the leader. Watching him as well as they could from the distance it seemed to the boys that the leader received the newcomer with a great show of respect. Followed a short period of conversation between the two, accompanied by many gesticulations and much pointing toward the Valkyrie.

"They mean us all right," Jack said grimly.

"Sure, I knew that all the time," Bob replied.

"What do you suppose they intend to do?"

"Rush us, most likely."

"En massé, as it were."

"Exactly."

"Well, it seems to me it's about time Cap'n Ole was trying to pull out."

"Back out, you mean."

"Well, any way to get out."

"And it's got to be done pronto if it's going to be 'done at all, for they're coming."

The leader of the navy, as Jack had referred to him, had finished his parley with the other leader and was now aboard his craft once more, and they could plainly hear his voice as he shouted orders.

"Where's Cap'n Ole?" Jack asked anxiously. "Seems to me we ought to be making tracks toward defending ourselves."

"Here he comes."

As he spoke the captain, followed by Mr. Lake-

wood and the entire crew except the engineer, came around the corner of the cabin and the boys saw that every man was carrying a rifle in his hands and that in each man's belt was a business-like appearing automatic.

"You boys got your guns," he asked.

"Two apiece," Bob assured him.

"Mr. Kelley, you take the wheel and when I give the word signal for all speed astern. Mac's got a good head of steam on. Now, boys," he continued, "I want to get away from here without killing any of those natives, if we can, but, of course, we've got to protect ourselves, and, remember, they're armed with the most deadly weapon in the world."

"Do yees mane them blow guns?" Pat asked.

"That's just what I mean, and one prick from their darts and it's all off."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ATTACK IN THE FOG.

"THEY'RE coming. Hadn't we better see if we can pull off?"

Mr. Lakewood asked the question as he saw the leader of the navy, evidently having finished his oration, sit down and pick up a paddle.

"We'll try, but I doubt if we can move her yet," Captain Ole told him. "Back her up, Mr. Kelley," he ordered waving his hand to the man in the wheel house.

Almost at once the propeller began to turn, and in a moment it was beating the water to a white foam, but the Valkyrie did not budge an inch.

"No go yet," the captain shook his head.

The boats were now moving toward the Valkyrie, but it was evident to those on board that the natives were in no hurry to come to close quarters. Probably aware of the fact that their victims, as they undoubtedly already considered them, were unable to get away and, at the same time having a healthy respect for their weapons, the sound of which at least, they had heard, they had evidently determined

to make the attack with as little danger to themselves as possible. So, instead of paddling directly toward the Valkyrie they began to spread out in a large bow.

"Just what I expected," Captain Ole growled.

"Meaning what?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"They're going to surround us."

"They naturally would."

"Yep, I suppose so, but I hoped they wouldn't have brains enough to plan it."

He had already stopped the effort to float the boat, fearing to strain some part of the machinery, and all was quiet on board, as they watched the small craft drawing gradually closer.

"How about firing a few rounds over their heads?" Bob asked.

"It won't do any harm, I suppose," the captain replied, and an instant later they all fired together, emptying their revolvers as rapidly as they could pull the triggers. By this time the small boats were spread out in a semicircle and as the shots rang out, the paddlers stopped as though undecided whether to keep on or to turn back. But, after a few moments of indecision, evidently noting that no one had received an injury, the leader shouted an order and the paddlers resumed their work.

"Reckon we'll have to make a hit or two next time," the captain announced grimly. "That didn't seem to impress them much."

The sun had come up bright and clear, but for some time now a haze, which had been getting thicker and thicker, had obscured it, until now it was shut out entirely.

"The worst thing possible's going to happen, I'm afraid," Captain Ole said soberly as he glanced about him.

"You mean we're going to have a fog?" Mr. Lakewood asked anxiously.

"In less than five minutes."

"That's bad."

"It's death, unless we can pull off before they get to us," the captain told them.

By the time he had finished speaking, the fog had entirely shut out the view of the island and one by one the boats began to disappear, as though a curtain had been drawn down in front of them. In less than the time stated by the captain not a boat was to be seen.

"Better try the engine again," Mr. Lakewood suggested.

Captain Ole gave the order, but although the engineer raced the engine to the utmost, it was without effect and he was finally forced to give it up. "There's only one thing to be done," he announced. "We must station ourselves all along the sides of the boat and keep them from getting on. And we don't want to waste any more ammunition," he added grimly.

The crew scattered, to take the designated stations and the boys found themselves to places on the port side and about ten feet apart. Then there was nothing to do but wait. Slowly the minutes passed, and not a sound was to be heard save the soft lap of the water against the sides of the boat. There was no wind and the fog was now so thick that it was with difficulty that they could see each other. They had been cautioned against making any noise, so they did not speak.

"They can't see us any better than we can see them so we'll let them have all the trouble we can in finding us," Captain Ole had said

"If only a breeze would spring up," Bob thought as he tried to pierce the dense fog and strained his ears to catch the faintest sound of an approaching enemy. On the other side of him he knew that Pat Barney was stationed, but he was unable to see him. The captain had ordered them to expose as little of their bodies above the railing as possible for fear that one of the poisoned darts might find a mark. "They can shoot the blamed things a good deal farther than you'd think, and they usually hit what they shoot at," he had told them.

It seemed to the boy that an hour must have passed, although a glance at his watch told him that it had really been but fifteen minutes since he had taken his post, when a sound reached his ears, from

out of the gloom, which made every nerve tingle. It was, he knew, the soft dip of a paddle handled by one who knew how to dip his paddle and lift it with the minimum amount of sound. He knew the boat could not be more than twenty or thirty feet away and, as Captain Ole had ordered them to shoot at the first indication of the proximity of one of the boats, he pointed his revolver toward the sound and fired.

"Reckon I didn't hit anything but water," he thought as no commotion followed the shot.

But an instant later a quick gasp, coming from his right, sent a note of fear through his heart.

"What is it, Pat?" he asked darting to the man's side.

For answer the Irishman held out his right hand and, to his horror, Bob saw a tiny feathered dart sticking in the back of it. Without an instant's hesitation he pulled his knife from his pocket and, after yanking the dart out, he stuck the point of the keen blade fully three quarters of an inch into the wounded member. A spurt of blood followed the removal of the blade and, seizing his wrist he pressed with all his might, at the same time applying his mouth to the wound. Pat, who had seemed a bit dazed, now tried to pull his hand away, but Bob hung on and sucked and spat out the blood until no more came.

"How do you feel?" he asked as he finally took his lips away.

"A—a bit—faint—but sure—an' it's—nuttin'."

"God grant I got it in time," Bob prayed.

"Yees had—better—be—gittin'—back," * Pat stammered weakly.

"You think you'll be all right?"

"Sure I will."

Knowing that he had done all he could and that he ought to be at his post, Bob hurried inside where he found a water cooler and hurriedly washed out his mouth, and then went quickly back to his station. All this had occupied less than two minutes but, during that interval he had heard several shots from different parts of the boat, and realized that the native boats must be all around them.

But when he got back to his place all was quiet, and he judged that the shots had made the natives a bit cautious.

"Where you been, Bob?"

It was Jack's voice in a loud whisper.)

"Pat got hit with a dart?"

"He did?"

"But I think I got it out in time. I sucked out all the poison I could. Are you all right?"

"Sure, but—"

"Keep down low."

"I know, but—"

"Better not talk now. Against orders, you know."

As he spoke, he noticed, for the first time, that the wind was freshening and, at the same time, that the fog was beginning to thin out quite perceptibly as he could now see Jack's outline as he crouched close to the rail. Whether it would be in their favor for the fog to lift just at that time, or whether it would favor the enemy, he was not sure, but he could not help a feeling of relief, as it would, at least, put an end to the awful uncertainty. A glance to his right told him that Pat was not in his place, and he wondered what had become of him.

The fog was lifting as rapidly as it had come, and soon he could see several of the boats, but they were not as close as he had feared.

"Reckon our fire made them pull off a bit," he thought.

"Don't fire," came the order in the captain's voice.

"But they're coming," Jack shouted at the top of his voice.

A glance told Bob that his brother was right. The boats were beginning to move and all in the direction of the Valkyrie.

"Everyone get inside," was the next order, and, wondering what it was all about, the boys ran for the big cabin.

"I'm going to try once more to start her, and

there's no use in exposing ourselves to their darts if she goes off.

"And if she doesn't?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"Then we'll have to get out and fight."

Even as he spoke the propeller began to churn the water astern, and it seemed that everyone held his breath as they waited the outcome.

"I reckon it's no—"

Captain Ole started to speak, but Jack interrupted him.

"She's starting," he shouted.

"I don't—"

"But I tell you she is. I felt her move," the boy insisted.

"Jack's right," Bob put in, glancing from the window.

"Right is right," Mr. Lakewood added, and a moment later there was no doubt about it.

Inch by inch the Valkyrie backed, as her powerful propeller bit into the water. But, even so, for a moment it seemed that it would be too late, for, before she was free from the clinging sands, three brown figures had climbed over the bow and reached the deck before being seen. But before they were half way to the cabin Jack spied them, and, taking quick aim, fired through the open door. With a wild howl of mingled pain and fear, the native dropped his blow pipe and rushed for the side of the

boat, and without stopping, leaped into the water. His companions hesitated an instant, then, as Jack fired again, they too turned and disappeared over the railing.

"Three down," Bob sang out.

"But none out," Jack chuckled. "I hit the first one in the fleshy part of his leg and the other I didn't hit at all."

Just then the bow of the boat dipped sharply, and they knew that at last she was afloat.

"Three cheers," Bob shouted, and they were given with a will.

"And thank God," Mr. Lakewood added.

Slowly the Valkyrie backed for a short distance, and then, turning slightly, headed for the open sea.

"No one outside till we're clear," Captain Ole ordered, as one of the sailors was about to pass through the door. "They can't hurt us now if we keep out of the way of those darts."

As they saw their fancied victims escaping, cries of rage came from the boats all about them and, when they did go out a little later they picked up more than a hundred of the small but deadly darts.

"What if she hadn't come off?" Jack asked, as he and Bob were watching the small boats, now well behind them, as they made their way back to the island, having given up the chase.

"Well she did, thank God, so what's the use of

worrying?" Bob responded. "By the way," he added, "have you seen Pat?"

"Not since before we went inside."

"Neither have I."

"You don't suppose he fell over do you?"

But Bob was already half way to the cabin door. As he stepped inside, he heard a groan from one corner where a water cooler was located. As he sprang toward it, his eye caught sight of a figure stretched at full length on the floor and he knew he had found Pat. But the Irishman was unconscious when he lifted his head, and he noted that his hand and arm were badly swollen.

"Guess I wasn't quick enough after all," he said, as Jack joined him.

"Is he dead?"

"No, but I'm afraid he will be soon. Help me place him on the lounge, and then find the captain and uncle. They may know what is best to be done."

Jack was back in less than five minutes, followed by Captain Ole and their uncle. The captain quickly bent and placed his ear over the sick man's heart.

"It's ticking pretty slow," he said.

"Have we anything we can give him?" Mr. Lakewood asked quickly.

"What he needs is a heart stimulant and, thank God, we've got it."

The captain was half way to his cabin, before he finished speaking, and they did not catch the last part of the sentence, but they knew what he was after.

"In a case of this kind, the main thing is to keep the heart action as strong as possible," he explained a moment later, after he had poured a few drops of the dark liquid down the sick man's throat. "But, if one of those darts got him, as I suppose it did, I can't understand why he wasn't dead before. That poison usually acts in less than a minute."

"Look at the back of his hand and you'll understand," Jack said.

"I see," Captain Ole beamed at Jack after a hasty inspection of the hand. "You sucked the poison out, eh?"

"No, Bob did it."

"Well, it doesn't make any difference who did it so long's it was done. It saved his life."

"You think he'll live?" Bob asked anxiously.

The captain again placed his ear over Pat's heart. "Yes, I think so," he told him, as he raised his head. "His heart's getting stronger."

In spite of the fact that Bob had sucked out so much of the poison, Pat had a very close call, but he pulled through, and in a couple of days was none the worse for his experience. It was a long time before he got through thanking Bob for saving his

life, and he absolutely refused to listen when Bob tried to make it plain to him that he had taken no risk at all and that it was nothing for which he deserved so much credit.

"Faith an' it's meself as knows thot it didn't make much difference whether me life was saved or not, but thot's not the pint. Suppose fer instance, yer'd had a bit uv a scratch on one uv yer lips or in yer mouth. It'd a bin all day wid yees let me tell yer. An' it's meself as supposes you stopped long enough ter have yer mouth examined ter make sure as how it was all safe and sound, eh."

This was a long speech for Pat to make and he was sweating when he finished.

"Now, Pat, you know I didn't mean to imply that saving your life was nothing," Bob laughed. "And if I'd had a scratch in my mouth and known it why—er—it might have been different."

"Niver a bit uv it."

"You said it," Jack added.

"Well, it's over, and if you want to thank me you can do it best by never saying anything more about it. But there's one question I'd like to ask."

"Fire it."

"How did you get in there by the cooler where we found you."

"Faith an' it's meself as can't answer thot question. I remember feeling kinder funny jest after

you left me, an then I didn't know nuttin' more till I was in bed."

It was the day following that on which they had run aground. The weather had continued fine and they had made several zig-zags but no more land had been sighted. Josh Kelley had been watched as closely as possible, but nothing had happened to increase their suspicions. It was evident to the boys and to their uncle and Captain Ole as well that the members were beginning to wonder what it was all about. Several times Bob and Jack had overheard two or three of them talking together and the object of the voyage was always the subject of the conversation.

It was while they were eating dinner that Captain Ole broached the subject.

"Somethin's going on among the crew that I don't just like," he told them.

"Meaning just what?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"It's not easy to say just what I do mean, but I've a mighty strong suspicion that that man, Josh Kelley's been talking to them."

"You don't mean he's trying to get them to mutiny?"

"That's about the size of it, I'm afraid."

For some moments there was silence and then Mr. Lakewood asked:

"Have you anything to suggest?"

"Yes," Captain Ole answered without hesitation.

"Well, what is it?"

"Simply that you tell the whole crew all about what we're after."

"You think it's wise?"

"If I didn't, I reckon I wouldn't have suggested it."

"No, of course not, but—"

"It's like this," the captain interrupted. "I believe every man we've got except Josh is a good man, and straight as sailors go, but the best of them can't stand too much mystery, and we've been laying it on pretty thick lately, with all this zig-zagging back and forth."

"What do you think, boys?"

"I think the captain's about right," Bob replied and Jack nodded in agreement.

"So do I," Mr. Lakewood declared after a short pause. "Jack, suppose you ask Pat to have all hands on deck in ten minutes, and I'll make a little speech and tell them all about things."

Ten minutes later found the entire crew gathered on the forward deck with the exception of the first mate who was in the wheel house where he could hear all that was said. Mr. Lakewood lost no time, but at once began to tell the story he had told the boys some weeks before, although he cut it much shorter. He finished by saying:

"Now men you know what we're after. Of course we may not find a thing, but if we do, one half of everything will go to Captain Ole, the two boys and myself. The other half will be divided equally among you share and share alike. This, of course, will be in addition to your wages."

"Three cheers fer de boss!" one of the men shouted.

The three cheers were given with a will, after which Mr. Lakewood added:

"Of course, I exect perfect loyalty from you."

"And yer'll get it," several assured him.

As the cheers were being given, Bob chanced to look at the second mate, who was standing at the foot of the stairs leading to the bridge. He was joining in the applause but half-heartedly, it seemed to the boy, and there was an expression about his mouth which increased his dislike and suspicion as well.

"It'll be a wonder if we don't have trouble with that fellow before we get back," he told Jack a little later, after the meeting had broken up.

"Don't I know it," Jack replied.

At the same time Captain Ole and Mr. Lakewood were talking in the former's cabin.

"See here," the captain was saying, "it wasn't in the papers that I was to have a share in the treasure."

"I know it," Mr. Lakewood told him, "but you're going to all the same, that is, provided we find anything worth dividing.

"But—"

"No buts about it. The matter's settled," and before the captain could offer any further objections, Mr. Lakewood had turned and left the room.

And at the same time, a tall lanky individual scowled as he bent over a small box in his state room and muttered: "I reckon the old man's spiked my guns in that direction."

CHAPTER IX.

A CLOSE CALL.

"My, but that water looks mighty inviting."

The Valkyrie was at anchor just outside a small cove of a small island not more than a couple of miles in circumference and nearly round in shape. It was late in the afternoon and the boat had limped to its present position some hours before with a badly cracked cylinder head. MacDonald, the engineer, had expressed the opinion that it would take the better part of two days to complete repairs.

It was scorching hot and only Bob and Jack were on deck, all the others except those working on the engine being below in their bunks where it was a bit cooler.

"It does look good," Jack agreed.

"How about a swim?"

"You said it."

Being dressed only in trousers and shirt it was only a matter of seconds before they were in the water and for half an hour they swam and dived.

"Guess I've had enough," Jack declared as he rose

to the surface, after a deep dive and shook the water from his face.

"I'll be in in a minute," Bob, who was floating idly a few yards away, told him.

Jack mounted the rope ladder and, after donning his clothes, went to his cabin for a book. As he returned to the deck he looked out over the water and a sight met his eyes which seemed, for an instant, to freeze the blood in his veins. Bob was swimming slowly toward the boat and was some two hundred feet away, while farther out, a black triangular object was cutting through the water. For a second the boy was spellbound then, galvanized into action, he shouted:

"Sharks, Bob, sharks!"

Bob heard the cry and, without waiting to look behind, him struck out with all his speed for the boat. When first seen the fin of the shark was not coming directly toward Bob but was moving nearly at right angles to the direction in which he was swimming. Jack prayed that the big fish had not seen him, but, as soon as he had uttered the warning, he rushed for his cabin and returned a moment later with his favorite Winchester in his hands. Eagerly he looked out and saw that Bob had covered fully half the distance to the boat, but, to his horror, he also saw that the shark had sighted him and was now coming straight for him. In fact the ominous

fin was only a matter of fifty feet from the swimmer and was rapidly cutting down the distance between them.

"He'll never make it," he gasped as he raised the rifle.

Bob, now fully aware of his danger, was plowing through the water, making the best speed of which he was capable, but it seemed to the frightened boy on the boat, that he was stationary, compared with the swiftness with which the fin was cutting through the water.

"Oh, God, send this bullet straight," he breathed as he aimed just a bit in front of the fin and pulled the trigger.

For an instant, after firing the shot, he dared not look, then, realizing that there might be time for another shot, he raised his eyes.

"Thank God," he gasped as he saw the huge body of the shark floating on the water and Bob almost at the foot of the ladder.

In another moment the two boys were in each other's arms.

"Oh, Bob," Jack sighed, the tears running down his face. "I thought I was going to lose you."

"And you would have if it hadn't been for that wonderful shot."

"God sped that bullet."

"I believe you."

"What's all the shooting about?"

The boys turned to see their uncle emerging from his cabin.

"Jack shot a shark," Bob said, pointing at the dead fish now floating only a short distance from the boat.

"What was he after," Mr. Lakewood demanded. Then noticing that Bob was naked, he asked: "You been in swimming?"

"Yes, sir," Bob replied.

"And you didn't know any better?"

"I was in too," Jack confessed. "You see, sir, it was so hot I reckon we didn't stop to think about the sharks."

"Well you ought to be spanked, and you will be if you ever do such a thing again."

"Yes, sir," both boys replied meekly.

"Tell me about it."

"He—er—it almost had me when Jack shot it," Bob stammered.

"You mean that shark would have had you if Jack hadn't shot it?"

"It sure would."

"Then it's a miracle," his uncle told him. "Shooting a shark in the water and killing him with one shot is something that can't be done once in a hundred times, let me tell you. I know because I've tried it and I'm considered a pretty good shot. Of course,

when you have one on a line, as we did a while ago, and can choose your time it's a different matter."

"God did it," Jack whispered.

"Not a doubt of it," his uncle agreed. "And it is by His grace that you're alive now," he added turning to Bob again.

"I—I know it, sir."

"And you'd better take your bath in the tub after this," Mr. Lakewood remarked dryly as he turned back to his cabin.

"I sure thought I was a goner that time," Bob said, as he pulled on his clothes after his uncle had left them.

"He must be all of twenty feet long," Jack said as he looked over the rail at the dead fish.

"About one bite and it would have been all up with me," Bob sighed.

"Well let's not talk any more about it. It's too horrible: How about getting a line on him?"

"I suppose we ought to save the oil."

They got a rope and, lowering one of the small boats, they soon had the shark securely tied, and later the crew secured several quarts of the valuable oil from its head.

All the next day, the work of repairing the engine went on, and it was not until supper time that MacDonald finally announced that they could proceed as soon as they wished.

"I reckon we'd better wait till morning now," Mr. Lakewood decided after a session with Captain Ole.

The boys had spent a part of the day on the little island, but as there was nothing of it save a pile of sand, there was little of diversion to attract them.

"That man Josh seems mighty uneasy," Bob whispered to Jack, as they leaned on the rail near the bow shortly after supper.

The second mate was walking slowly back and forth on the deck, a little way behind them, and seemed unaware of their presence. From time to time, they noticed that he would gaze for some seconds toward the south, as though expecting to see something. Then he would resume his restless pacing, his eyes fixed on the deck.

"He's sure got something on his mind," Jack whispered back.

"He's on the lookout for something or someone."

"Maybe."

"Dead certain."

"Reckon you're right."

"I wonder if he knows how to send and receive wireless."

"I don't know, why?"

"Well, I missed the key to the wireless room this morning. I didn't say anything about it, thinking probably I'd mislaid it. But I hunted for it every

place I could think of and didn't find it, and then after dinner it was back again in its place."

"But he'd hardly dare send in the day time, or even to go into the room."

"No. but he might have taken the key, and then filed one to match it."

"That's so, and it's probably just what he did." Jack agreed.

"Then he probably knows the code."

"Of course. It wouldn't be of much use to him if he didn't."

"You get the key, and let's go take a look and see if there's any evidence that he's been in the room."

"Right. I'll be back in a minute."

But they failed to find anything wrong in the little room which was used for the wireless. They tested the apparatus, and found it all in good order, nor could they find any indication that anyone save themselves had been in the room.

"If he's made a key to fit the door, I don't believe he's used it yet," Bob said after they had made a thorough examination of the room and its contents.

"But he must intend to."

"Of course."

"Then I reckon it's up to us to see that he doesn't."

"Of course again."

"To-night?"

"To-night what?"

"I mean does he intend to use it to-night?"

"I think it's more than likely. By his actions out there he evidently thinks that someone's not very far away."

"Then I see where we play detective."

"I happen to know that he goes on watch at twelve o'clock to-night and I think we'd better be on watch after that too."

"We will."

The boys went to bed shortly after eight o'clock that night, but seeing that they had been up very early that morning, no one seemed to think it strange. Bob had a small alarm clock and, before getting into bed, he set it for twelve o'clock.

"It's raining," he announced in a whisper after the alarm had awakened him and he had succeeded in shaking Jack out of his sleep.

"Well I don't know's that makes any difference in our plans, does it?"

"Not a dif. But come, snap out of it."

"Be with you in two shakes," Jack whispered as he leaped from the bunk.

The wireless room was directly behind the wheel house and they had decided to watch their chance and slip into the latter room and trust to luck that the mate would not see them. They believed that once in there they would be able to hear him if he made an attempt to enter the other room.

"It's dark as pitch," Bob said trying to look out the window.

"So much the better."

"But we've got to be mighty careful just the same.. If he sees us he'll know what we're up for and all the fat'll be in the fire," Bob declared.

"Think we'd better go one at a time?"

"No, we'll go together. Might's well both be caught as one."

"All right: just as you say."

They had slipped on trowsers and shirts but were in their bare feet as they opened the door and cautiously stepped outside. For an instant they stood still, close to the side of the cabin, and listened. There was no sound to indicate that the mate was near and they slowly crept along hugging the wall. It was so dark that they could see nothing at all until they reached the corner and looked out onto the forward deck. Here a single light slightly illuminated the forward part of the boat and Bob, who was in the lead, saw the tall form of the mate well up at the bow. He was sitting on a coil of rope and had his head in his hands.

"We might get by and then again we might not," Bob explained as he stepped back a pace.

"Better not take a chance," Jack whispered. "He won't sit there long."

But it was all of a half hour before the mate

changed his position and the boys had about lost patience when Bob, who peeped around the corner every few minutes, whispered that he was standing up. Soon footsteps warned them that he was coming their way and they pressed as closely as possible against the side of the cabin and waited. He passed within a foot of them but, so intense was the darkness, he failed to see them. They waited another minute and then Bob whispered now, and in another moment they were up the stairs and safe, for the time, in the wheel house.

"So far so good," Bob chuckled.

They stretched themselves on the floor close to the partition which separated them from the wireless room and waited. There was little danger now of discovery, they thought, even should he come into the room unless he should turn on the light and they did not think he would be likely to do that.

Another half hour passed before they heard his steps coming up the stairs. He stepped onto the bridge and for another long period he made no sound. Then they heard him enter the wheel house and the creak of a chair told them that he had sat down. Followed an agonizing period during which they hardly dared breathe. Once he lit his pipe and, as the match flared up they thought surely they would be discovered, but his back was toward them

and he did not turn. at least until the match went out.

"Well, I guess it's about time."

The man spoke the words aloud but in a low tone. Then they heard him get up and, a moment later, pass out of the room.

"Time for what?" Jack whispered, his lips close to Bob's ear.

"That's what we've got to find out," Bob whispered back.

He passed the door of the wheel house and, a moment later, they heard him at the door of the wireless room.

"You guessed right," Jack whispered.

There seemed to be some trouble in getting the door unlocked and the boys hoped that the key would not fit. Several times they heard the man mutter under his breath and more than once he used, what Jack afterward referred to as "quite illuminating language." But finally they heard the door open and close.

"Come on now," Bob whispered as he got quietly to his feet.

Without knowing what plan Bob had in his head Jack followed him from the wheel house and around to the door of the wireless room. Through the crack beneath the door they could see a gleam of light and knew that he had turned on the electric but the shut-

ters of the single window were so tightly closed that no ray came through them.

"What you going to do?" Jack whispered.

"Just a minute and I'll tell you," Bob whispered back as he drew from his pocket a pair of small pliers adapted for cutting wire.

He knew just where the lead in from the aerial entered the room and that just beside the door was a large insulator through which the wire passed. It was the work of but an instant to cut the wire just below this insulator. Then he pulled the upper part of the wire up about an inch and then stuck the piece, which he had cut off, up into the insulator, pushing it far enough so that it securely held but being careful that the two ends did not touch. In this way he put the apparatus entirely out of commission and in such a way that it would be likely to take a long time for anyone else to locate the trouble.

This was done in much less time than it takes to tell it and, taking Jack by the arm, he pulled him gently away from the door.

"He's welcome to all the messages he gets," he chuckled as soon as they were around in front of the wheel house.

"What'd you do?"

Bob explained how he had split the aerial.

"Fine," Jack praised him. "He'll never find out where the trouble is in a week of Sundays."

Just then they heard a faint snapping sound from behind them and Bob whispered :

"He's trying to send."

"But he isn't using much power," Jack added.

"Afraid some of us'll hear it."

"Can we get it?"

"Listen."

For some moments the boys strained their ears to catch the faint sparks which came from the wireless, but finally Bob said :

"It's no use. Either he's using some code which I don't know or else it's so faint I've got it all balled up."

"Same here. I couldn't make head or tail out of it."

"Well, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the person or persons he thinks he's sending to isn't making even that much out of it because he isn't hearing it at all," Bob chuckled.

"But, Bob, if he expects to get him with a spark of that size he must think he's pretty near."

"Reckon that's so."

Just then the sounds of the sparks stopped.

"He's listening for the answer now," Jack chuckled.

"He'll know right off that the thing's dead."

"Sure he will."

"S-s-s-h."

They heard the door open and the man step out.

"Something's the matter with the blamed thing," they heard him mutter.

"You said it, old man," Jack whispered.

From the sounds they judged that he was feeling for the lead-in wire and they were, for a moment, filled with apprehension lest he find the break for they knew it would take only a slight yank to pull either end from the insulator. Soon, however, their fears were relieved as they heard him mutter: "Must be something on the inside. Everything seems to be all right out here." Then the door shut as he passed in.

"Go to it," Jack whispered. "If you find it in there you're a whole lot better than I think you are."

They were now in the wheel house again and, pressing their ear against the partition, they could hear him as he was evidently testing the different parts of the set.

"Hope he doesn't loose his temper and smash anything," Jack whispered as they heard something drop on the floor.

"I don't think he'd dare do that."

"Nor I. But you never can tell what a man of his stripe will do."

For several minutes after that there was no sound from the wireless room and then the sparking was heard again.

"He's trying to send again," Jack whispered.

"Well, he can't do any harm at that," Bob whispered back. "I only wish we could read his stuff."

"He's sending the same thing over and over again."

"You mean he's trying to," Bob chuckled.

Then all was quiet again and the boys judged that he must be listening again for a reply to his message. Five, ten and then fifteen minutes passed without a sound. Then suddenly they heard the door open and, a moment later, footsteps approached the wheel house. Bob nudged Jack as a signal to make no noise and Jack nudged him back in token of his understanding. For some time the mate stood on the bridge moving uneasily from time to time and finally he entered the room and sat down in the chair which stood directly in front of the wheel.

"I more'n half believe those boys suspect me," they heard him mutter after a few minutes had passed.

"You win," Bob thought to himself as he carefully nudged his brother again.

"Something was the matter with that wireless but I'll be hanged if I could find out what it was," they heard him say.

Then, as though unable to stay long in one place, he went out onto the bridge again and, a moment

later, they heard his steps as he descended the stairs to the lower deck.

"What'll we do now?" Jack whispered.

"What do you think?"

"I don't know but we might's well go to bed. I hardly think he'll try anything more to-night.

"What time is it?"

"Half after two."

"Well, I think we'd better stick it out till daylight. You see—" But before he could finish his sentence they heard the mate coming up the stairs again.

He stood just outside the door and, in a moment, they were electrified to see a stream of light dart from his hand.

"He's signalling again," Bob thought.

From where they lay they were, of course, unable to see whether or not he was receiving any reply to his signals and soon Bob was determined that he was going to get out where he could see regardless of the risk. Carefully he urged his body toward the door inch by inch confident that Jack would understand and lie quiet. He reached the open door without making the slightest noise and, even in the intense darkness, he could see the mate as he stood by the railing not more than six feet away. Slowly and cautiously he drew himself to his feet until he was standing erect in the doorway. He knew that the

man might turn his head at any moment, but he trusted to the more intense darkness, with the room as a background, to hide him in case it happened.

The mate was now flashing his light rapidly out over the water and Bob strained his eyes to catch the faintest sign of an answering flash from out in the night. But, so far as he could see, none came, and after a few more minutes, the man, with an exclamation of disgust, turned after shutting off his light. Would he see the boy standing like a statue in the doorway? Bob dared not make a move so close was he to the mate and he held his breath for fear he might catch even that slight sound. One, two and then three steps he took toward him and so close was he that Bob could have reached out his hand and touched him. Then suddenly, as though struck by a new idea, he turned and quickly descended the stairs. Had he seen or heard him? Bob was not sure. He had heard no sound from Jack, and, for a second, he was undecided what to do. Then, he darted down the stairs in pursuit of the man. As soon as he reached the lower deck he paused and listened. No sound, to tell him which way he had gone, was audible and he had no way of knowing. But, from the suddenness of the man's movement as he had turned, he felt certain that he had had some definite object in mind and he was determined to find out what the object was if at all possible. So far

they had learned nothing that would be of any help. To be sure they had foiled his attempt to send a message to his confederates, whoever they might be, but with that he was far from satisfied.

Perhaps he had gone to see if they were in their cabin. The thought struck him suddenly and, without waiting to analyze it, he started off as rapidly as he dared. But, when he had reached the door of his cabin he had not encountered the man and, after listening a moment, he opened it and went in. Turning on the light for an instant he satisfied himself that the room was empty nor could he see any evidence that the mate had been there.

"Reckon I guessed wrong that time," he thought as he switched off the light.

Stepping outside once more, for some moments he stood leaning against the railing looking out across the dark water. He made no attempt at concealment knowing that he could easily explain his presence in case the man should discover him.

"Up early 'aint yer?"

The question came so suddenly that Bob gave a start. Then, turning, he saw that the mate was standing close behind him.

"Great snakes, I'd as soon be killed as scared to death," he laughed.

"Didn't mean ter scare yer," the man apologized.

"Oh, it's all right," the other assured him. "It

was a bit close in the cabin and I thought there'd be more air out here," he explained.

"Yep, it's a close night. Looks 's though it might rain."

"Which way's the wind?

"Nor-east, what thar is of it, which same 'aint much."

"I'll say it isn't."

"Wonder yer brother didn't want some air too."

"Oh, Jack's a better sleeper than I am," Bob laughed easily.

"Reckon I could sleep all right if I had the chance."

"Go ahead and hit the hay," Bob told him. "I'll stand the rest of your watch. I wouldn't sleep any more anyway and I'd rather stay out here than inside."

"You mean it?"

"Sure I do. Go to it."

"But mebby the cap' might not like it."

"He won't care as long as someone is on the watch," Bob assured him.

"Then I reckon as how I'll do it. I'm mighty sleepy."

The mate turned and disappeared in the darkness going toward his quarters. Bob waited a few minutes and then made his way to the wheel house.

"Where you been?" Jack demanded as soon as he was inside.

Bob told him what had happened and added: "You'd better get back to bed."

"Like fun I will and leave you alone."

"But, Jack, there's no danger."

"How do you know there isn't?"

"How could there be? You see, I'm not sure whether he really turned in or not, and if he should see you up he'd know something was in the wind. I honestly think you ought to go."

"Well, all right if you feel that way about it," Jack said after a moment's thought. "But you have to promise that you won't get into trouble or I won't go a step."

"Of course I won't," Bob laughed. "Now run along like a good little boy."

He accompanied him as far as the door of the cabin and then went back to the bridge. During the remainder of the night he made frequent rounds of the boat, half expecting to meet the mate again. But in this he was agreeably disappointed. Nor, although he watched carefully, did he see anything which could be taken for a signal.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE IS JOSH?

THEY weighed anchor shortly after six o'clock. The wind, which had been increasing in strength since four o'clock, was blowing hard from the northwest and the sky looked threatening but Captain Ole assured them that there would be no great storm as the glass had fallen only a couple of points. He proved to be a good weather prophet for, although it began to rain shortly after they had gotten under way, at the same time, the wind began to fall and by noon there was only a light breeze although it was still raining.

At the first opportunity, which did not come until after dinner as Mr. Lakewood, complaining of a severe headache, remained in his bunk until nearly noon, they told their uncle of the mate's actions.

"I get these headaches once in a while," he told the boys as he joined them just as they were sitting down to dinner.

"Is it better now." Bob asked anxiously.

"Yes, in fact it's all gone. I took some aspirin and got to sleep again and the two knocked it."

He remained silent for fully two minutes after Bob had told him about the happenings during the night.

"I almost wish you had called me," he finally said.

"What would you have done, sir?" Jack asked.

"I don't know as I could have done any more than you two did. Of course we might have pounced in on him while he was sending but I don't know that it would have done any good. I suppose he would have had some plausible excuse and, on second thought, I guess it's just as well you didn't."

It was just after sundown when they again sighted land. In this latitude there is very little twilight and darkness comes very soon after the sun sinks below the horizon. So they had made but a short distance toward the distant island before it was blotted from their sight. But Captain Ole had the direction and, turning on the powerful searchlight, he kept on at full speed.

"We'll get near enough so that we can anchor for the night," he told them.

"At the rate you're going you want to be careful or you'll jump clear over it before you know it," Jack laughed.

"It looked to me, what I could see of it, as though it would be a pretty good jump," Bob smiled. "I'd say it's a fairly good sized island."

"Maybe it's the one we're after," Jack suggested.

"We'll know in the morning," his uncle promised him.

"Seems as though we ought to pick it up pretty soon," the captain said a little later.

"I reckon it must have been further off than it looked," Mr. Lakewood said.

But when another half hour had passed and there was no sign of the island it was plain that the captain was beginning to be worried.

"It's mighty strange," he muttered.

"Isn't it possible that we've gone past it?" Bob asked.

"Hardly, unless something has happened to the compass and that's not likely."

When another half hour had slipped by and they had not picked up the island the captain gave the signal to stop and the boat slowly lost headway.

"We've gone by it or else it's moved," he declared, "See how much water there is under her," he shouted to the first mate who was standing in the bow.

"Seven and a half fathoms, sir," the mate announced a few minutes later, after he had cast the lead.

"Let go the anchor, then. We'll stay right where we are till morning."

"Yes, sir." And the anchor was run out and soon the Valkyrie was riding at the end of a hundred feet of chain.

The captain still wore a troubled look when, some time later, the boys joined him in the main cabin where he was pouring over a large map which was spread out on the large center table.

"Where in thunder do you suppose that pesky island went to?" he asked looking up as they entered the room.

"Maybe one of those whales, Mr. Kelley was telling us about the other night, swallowed it," Jack grinned.

"You don't want to believe all you hear, especially from a sailor," the captain told them with a broad smile, adding: "I don't suppose there was much more'n room on the Atlantic ocean for that whale to turn round in, eh."

"Well, maybe it wasn't quite that bad but I reckon it could have swallowed that island all right without making more'n two bites at the outside," Bob laughed. "But don't you think that it's possible that that island was only a mirage?"

"But we saw it after the sun had gone down."

"I know it, sir, and, of course, my theory may be a bit far fetched but, owing to the refraction of light, isn't it possible for a mirage to happen after sundown?"

"Can't say for sure, but I never saw one then, I mean after the sun had set. But if we don't see it in the morning I reckon we'll have to let it go at that."

"I think you're wrong, Bob," Jack said as the captain paused.

"How come?"

"Because the refraction of light wouldn't do it."

"How do you know it wouldn't?"

"Because we really see the sun for some time after it has set. That's because of refraction. So after we can't see it it would be too far below the horizon. I'll have you understand that I didn't make 97% in physics last term for nothing."

"You win. Go to the head of the class," Bob laughed.

"And another thing you seem to have overlooked, it was too cloudy when the sun set for a mirage anyhow."

"Bull's eye again, professor," Bob laughed. "And now maybe you can tell us just where the island really did go."

"It didn't go anywhere," Jack retorted, flushing slightly at Bob's tone. "It's right where it's been all the time."

"And that's where."

"Right ahead of us."

"How do you know that?" Captain Ole asked quickly.

"I—I don't know it, but I think it is."

"Then you think it was farther off than it looked?"

"Yes, sir. That's what I think."

"And you may be right at that," Captain Ole mused, scratching his head thoughtfully.

The boys learned a little later that the first mate would have the watch after midnight, so, after telling him what they had seen the night before and cautioning him to keep an eye out for signals, they retired soon after eleven o'clock.

"The boy was right."

The above statement shouted in loud tones by Captain Ole whose head stuck in through the half opened door of their cabin, awoke the boys a few minutes before six the following morning.

"You mean the island's in sight ahead of us," Bob asked sleepily.

"That's what I mean and it's a good way ahead at that," Captain Ole told them as he pushed the door wide open and stepped into the room. "There must have been some condition in the atmosphere last night that made it look a whole lot nearer than it was," he explained. "Anyhow it's there now all right."

"Are we under way?" Jack asked as he leaped from his bunk.

"Not yet, but we will be in about two shakes of a mackerel's tail," the captain said as he turned and left the room.

"Never again will I doubt your wisdom," Bob de-

clared solemnly as he started pulling on his clothes.

"'Twas only a lucky guess," Jack said modestly.

"Never hide your light under a bushel, son."

"Aw, quit your kidding."

"I'm not kid—" Bob began, but Jack had gone.

Bob followed him out onto the deck a moment later and found that the anchor had just been raised and the bow of the Valkyrie slowly swinging around to the north.

"Where's Mr. Kelley?"

The captain shouted the question to the first mate who was standing at the foot of the stairway.

"Haven't seen him this mornin' sir," was the reply.

"Any you men seen him?"

No one had seen the second mate since the night before and the captain ordered one of the hands to go to his room and call him.

"Never knew him to oversleep before," he said to Bob who had mounted to the bridge.

"He ain't there, sir" the sailor called a moment later from the deck.

"What you mean, he isn't there?" the captain demanded. "Did you look in his room?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he wasn't there?"

"No, sir. There wan't no one there an' his bunk hadn't been slept in neither, sir."

"Well, you and a couple of others make a search of the ship and hurry too."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"What's wrong now?" Mr. Lakewood asked as he joined Bob on the bridge.

"The second mate seems to be missing, sir," Bob told him.

"Josh Kelley?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you make of it, captain?" Mr. Lakewood asked leaning over the sill of the window of the wheel house.

"Oh, I reckon probably he's somewhere about the boat."

"You think so?"

"Where else could he be unless he's fallen overboard and that's hardly likely?"

But the captain for once in his life was wrong. The second mate was not on board the Valkyrie. His personal belongings were, so far as they could judge, still in his cabin but the man had disappeared completely. As soon as that fact was thoroughly settled Captain Ole called the first mate into his cabin, leaving the wheel in charge of one of the sailors.

"You didn't see Kelley during the night?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Nor hear anything suspicious?"

"No, sir."

"Well, did you see anything that might have been a signal?" was the next question.

"Niver a bit uv it," Pat replied and then, after a moment's pause he added: "'Twas thot dark last night thot it's meself as couldn't see inything ter spake uv, sir."

"I know. Now look here, Pat, either he jumped overboard, which isn't likely, or else someone came in a small boat and took him off. Would it have been possible for a small boat, say a canoe, to have sneaked up to the Valkyrie without you knowing it?"

"Faith an' it's meself as thinks as how 'twould have bin aisy enough if he knew jest where to come to," Pat declared after a short pause.

"And you think that's what happened?"

"Mor'n likely, sir."

"But, since it was so dark, how could anyone have seen where to come? That's what gets me."

"'Tis a bit strange, sir."

"It's more than that, it's uncanny."

"'Tis all uv thot, sir."

"Well," the captain said as he got to his feet, "tell Jim Herrin that he's to have the second mate's berth till further orders. He's the best one for it, don't you think?"

"He's a broth uv a bye an' he'll make a good one,"

Pat assured him as they left the room together.

Mounting to the bridge he found Mr. Lakewood and the boys looking at the island which was now quite plainly visible.

"I've made Jim Herrin second mate," he announced.

"Then you really think he's gone?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"Sure he's gone."

"But how?"

The captain told him what had seemed most probable to him as well as to the first mate and he agreed with him that it had probably happened that way.

"Then he's joined whoever he's in league with," Mr. Lakewood said when he had finished.

"Looks like it," the captain agreed.

"Then we may look for something to happen most any time?"

"Not till we find what we're after, I'm thinking."

"It's good riddance to bad rubbish, I'm thinking," Jack declared.

"I agree with you provided the riddance is permanent," Bob added.

"Which it won't be if I'm any kind of a prophet. We haven't seen the last of that fellow yet," Mr. Lakewood contributed.

"Well never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you," Jack laughed as he turned his eyes again to-

ward the distant island which was now rapidly coming into plain view. "What do you think of it, uncle?"

Mr. Lakewood took the glasses from his eyes. "Looks kind of like it but I can't be sure yet. See that high point on that end?" he asked pointing.

"Yes," both the boys told him.

"Well, that's what makes me think it may be the place. But I reckon we'll have to wait a bit and see."

The Valkyrie was plowing through the water at a high speed as the captain had passed the word to "step on her," and it was only a few minutes before Mr. Lakewood said: "Unless there are two islands almost exactly alike that's our island."

In another twenty minutes the captain gave the signal to slow down and finally the Valkyrie came to rest about a quarter of a mile from the island and near the center.

"Made up your mind yet," he asked as he stepped from the wheel house.

Mr. Lakewood looked slightly doubtful as he answered the question.

"Seems as though I ought to be sure one way or the other but, to be honest, I'm not. It looks like it especially out at that high end and then again it doesn't. It doesn't seem to me that there were near

so many trees on it as there are now. There's quite a forest over on that other end."

"But they might have grown there since you were on the island," Bob suggested.

"Perhaps," his uncle agreed slowly, "but it's not usual for new trees to spring up out of the sand on these islands. You can see that the island's pretty sandy."

"I'll say it is," Jack agreed.

"Can you see the trees where you got the coconuts?" Captain Ole asked.

"No, I can't, and that's another thing that bothers me."

"Maybe someone has cut them down," Jack suggested.

"Maybe," his uncle said doubtfully.

It was now about nine o'clock and, after a short discussion, it was decided to pay a visit to the island at once and settle the matter. The captain ordered a boat lowered and, leaving the Valkyrie in charge of the new second mate, the four together with the first mate, were soon on their way.

"We'll go up to the top of that hill, though it isn't much of a hill, and see if we can find any trace of that grove that ought to be there," Mr. Lakewood said as the boat pushed its bow on to the sand.

It took them but a few minutes to reach the top of the rise and they all began to look eagerly for marks

which would identify the place. But those marks they failed to find. There was no indication that a cocoanut tree had ever graced the spot.

"It looks doubtful," Mr. Lakewood said shaking his head.

"But twenty years more or less can make a big change even in a place like this, I reckon," Captain Ole reminded him.

"That's true, and I'm not saying it isn't the place," the other returned.

"Well, there's one way we can tell," Bob spoke up.

"And that's to go over to the high end, I suppose you mean," Mr. Lakewood smiled.

"You guessed it," Bob smiled back.

"Come on, then, let's beat it," Jack said as he started to lead the way.

But before they had taken a dozen steps there came a startling interruption. A queer half stifled cry, coming from some distance behind them, made them turn quickly.

"What was that?" Bob gasped in surprise.

"Sounded like someone shouted from over in those woods," Jack said, his eyes fixed on the distant grove.

"But I never heard a human make a noise like that," Captain Ole declared.

"Faith an' it's a quare human thot'd make thot

kind of a noise, I'm thinkin'," Pat agreed with him.

"Let's wait a minute and see if we hear it again," Mr. Lakewood advised.

But, although they waited some five minutes the cry was not repeated.

"Well shall we go on?" he asked.

"Might's well, I reckon," Captain Ole said, and they started on again.

But they had hardly turned their backs when the weird sound reached them again.

"I reckon we'd better investigate that a bit before we go any further," Captain Ole advised as he turned in his tracks.

"I think you're right," Mr. Lakewood agreed, adding: "It's a whole lot better to be careful than sorry."

So they started back the other way and, after stopping every little while to listen, in the course of some fifteen minutes, they had nearly reached the other end of the island which, as Mr. Lakewood had said, was timbered with a thick growth of trees. No repetition of the cry had been heard during the time and now, as they stopped about thirty feet from the edge of the woods, they strained their ears to catch the faintest sound which might come from them.

"What kind of trees are they?" Captain Ole asked Mr. Lakewood in a low tone.

"I'm not sure but I think they're a species of a cocoanut," he replied.

"But I've seen lots of cocoanut trees and I never saw any like them," the captain objected.

"Nor I. but it seems to me I can see some big nuts on that nearest one," he said pointing to a large tree which stood a little apart from the others.

"I can see them," Bob agreed with him.

"And they sure do look like cocoanuts to me," Jack added.

"Well, you may be right, and I reckon you are," the captain gave in.

"What we going to do now?" Bob asked after a moment's pause.

"Have you got your revolvers with you," their uncle asked.

"Sure," Bob replied pulling the weapon from his pocket.

"I too," Jack said.

"I left mine on board," the captain confessed a bit chagrined.

"Me too," Pat acknowledged.

"Well, I've got mine so I reckon we're well enough armed," Mr. Lakewood told them." But, before we enter the grove let's try turning back as though we were going off to the other end."

They fell in with his plan and, no sooner had they turned their backs and started walking away from

the grove, than the cry came again and this time it was so loud and weird that, as Jack afterward confessed, it made his skin crawl.

"That's a man," Captain Ole declared as they came to a stop.

"But what would a man be doing on this island?" Mr. Lakewood asked skeptically.

"I don't know, but if that wasn't a man I'm a Dutchman."

"Then it's meself as believes yer Dutch," Pat grinned.

"But I ain't," the captain retorted somewhat hotly, and to prove that I ain't I'm going to get that fellow and show him to you."

Before he had finished speaking he had turned and started back toward the grove on the run and they barely caught the final words. But, as if by common assent, the others quickly followed him and were at his heels by the time he had reached the edge of the grove.

"Better take it easy," Mr. Lakewood cautioned as he caught hold of the captain's arm.

But he shook him off and plunged into the woods, and for a moment, was lost to sight. In a very short time, however, the others caught up with him and together they worked their way as rapidly as possible through the trees which grew so closely together that anything more than a slow walk was out of the

question. Every few feet they stopped to listen but no sound, indicating the presence of anyone outside their party, reached them and in less than twenty minutes from the time they had entered the wood they emerged from the other side and found themselves only a few feet from the ocean.

As they stood for a moment looking out over the water was it fancy or did Jack's sharp ears catch a faint sound of what seemed to him to be a wild mocking laughter far back in the depths of the woods?

"Did you hear that?" he asked turning to Bob who was standing a few feet away.

"Did I hear what?" Bob asked.

"Sounded like laughter to me."

"No, I didn't hear anything except the swaying of the trees back in there."

"Maybe that was what I heard," Jack said but he did not look as though he believed it.

"Well, what now?" Mr. Lakewood asked a moment later.

"Let's walk along the edge here," Captain Ole suggested. "We'll come to your end of the island about as soon that way as to go back," he added as he started to lead the way along the edge of the grove. "I reckon you were right about these being cocoanut trees," he said after they had gone a hundred feet or so. As he spoke he stooped and picked up from

the ground beneath one of the trees a large nut which looked like an ordinary cocoanut except that it was much smoother.

"Break it open and see what's inside," Jack suggested.

"Just what I was going to do," the captain said throwing the nut with all his strength against a large rock.

The blow cracked the nut wide open and nearly a half pint of white milk ran out on the ground before he could pick it up.

"It's a cocoanut all right," he declared as he showed them the white meat inside. "And it has a mighty good flavor," he added as he broke off a piece and thrust it into his mouth.

They all sampled it and found it, as the captain had said, of excellent flavor.

"Maybe that was Mr. Burbank," Jack grinned as he swallowed a good sized mouthful of the meat. "He may have moved out here and is inventing a new kind of nut."

CHAPTER XI.

THEY FIND THE CAVE.

THEY were walking slowly along listening with all their ears and keeping their eyes turned, for the most of the time, toward the grove. The captain was in the lead with Mr. Lakewood close behind him; then came Jack followed by Pat, while Bob brought up the rear. They had just passed the last of the trees when Bob felt the swish of some object as it flew past his head and landed on the back of the first mate's head with a resounding crack. That worthy at once pitched forward and fell face down. Bob sprang and turned him over at the same time calling to the others.

"Something hit him on the back of the head," he explained as they turned and rushed back. "It was that nut there."

Pat was unconscious but only for a minute. "Was it lightning?" he gasped as he struggled to his feet.

"No, it was nut," Jack grinned, but the hot-headed Irishman was in no mood to catch the pun.

"Whot was it thin," he demanded rubbing the back of his head.

"Someone or something threw this nut at us and hit you," Bob told him as he picked up the nut.

"An' it's meself as he can't do thot wid and git away wid it," he sputtered starting back toward the grove.

But the captain caught him by the arm and held him back. "Easy there now," he cautioned.

"Aisy me eye. I'm going ter git the sapleen whot threw thot nut, I'm tellin' yer."

"Not that way you aren't," the captain insisted easily holding the struggling mate. "Maybe it was a gorilla or an orang-outang and if it was he'd make mince meat of you if you go rushing in there."

"But—"

"No buts about it. You do as I say or I'll put you in irons when we get back to the ship," the captain told him, but the boys caught the twinkle in his eye and knew that he was only bluffing. Evidently the Irishman caught it also for his look of fierce determination vanished and a good natured grin spread over his face.

"All right," he said. "Yer're the boss," and the captain let go his hold.

"We'll investigate this grove when we're better armed," the captain promised them as he started off again.

Once more it seemed to Jack that he caught the sound of laughter from back in the depths of the

woods, but as none of the others seemed to hear it, he said nothing.

It was just eleven when, finally, they reached the other end of the island and stood on the edge of the cliff. Three or four times they had asked Mr. Lakewood what he thought about it being the right place during the walk from the grove. But he had refused to commit himself until they had reached the very end of the island.

"I think it's it," he said slowly, "but I'll know for sure in a short time now. If I'm right there's a passage a short distance off there which leads down to the water and in that passage is the entrance to the cave of pearls."

"Let's go then," Jack said impatiently.

"At once," his uncle told him as he turned to lead the way. "Here it is for a fact," he declared a few minutes later as he stopped and pointed to a narrow defile which separated the cliff into two parts.

"Hurrah!" shouted both of the boys.

"Follow me, now, and be careful where you step; it's a bit rough if I remember rightly," their uncle said as he started down the narrow defile.

He was right when he called the path rough and they had to go very slowly picking their way over rocks some of them as large as a barrel. But they had only a short distance to go and soon the leader,

stopped and pointed to an opening which appeared as though cut in the wall of stone.

"Now for it," he said, pulling a flashlight from his pocket.

The opening was tall enough for them to walk upright but so narrow that they had to go single file and even then their arms sometimes touched both sides of at the same time.

"Good thing none of us is very fat," Jack chuckled as he followed close at his uncle's heels.

"It's only a step or two farther," Mr. Lakewood said and, a moment later he stopped and threw the light from his flash about a small chamber just in front of where they stood.

Then a great wave of disappointment swept over the boys for the floor of the cave was bare. Not a single oyster shell was to be seen.

"Stung," Jack gasped.

"Looks that way, doesn't it," his uncle said with no trace of disappointment in his voice.

"But where did they go?" Jack asked.

For a moment no one replied and then Bob said: "Well, I've never heard of oysters walking so I reckon we've got to conclude that some one has beaten us to them."

"Faith an' it's a great brain you got," Pat laughed.

"Well, boys, it's getting along toward dinner time, so I reckon we'd better be getting back to the boat,"

Mr. Lakewood said as he turned and started out through the opening.

"He's got something up his sleeve," Bob whispered to Jack as they fell in behind the others.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because he didn't seem to mind it."

"He didn't for a fact. But what can he have up his sleeve as you put it?"

"We'll have to wait and see. He knows."

It was well past twelve o'clock when they were back on board and Wong, having kept dinner waiting all of ten minutes, was in a bad mood.

"You velly mooch late," he snapped as they entered the mess cabin.

"But we're hungry enough to make up for it," Jack told him.

"You velly lucky to gleet anything," was the answer he got.

"It's a good thing for us that Wong's bite isn't as bad as his bark," Bob laughed as they sat down at the table.

"You didn't seem to be much disappointed, Uncle Si," Jack ventured when they were nearly through the meal and he had not mentioned the subject.

"No? Well, you see, I didn't expect to find them there."

"You didn't?" both boys gasped. "Then what did

you come for?" Bob asked, a look of amazement on his face.

"Pearls," laconically.

"But—"

"Give me time and I'll tell you all about it," his uncle interrupted. "You see, the chances are that those oysters would have rotted long before this if no one had found them."

"Would that have spoiled the pearls?" Jack asked.

"I hardly know about that but the chances are that the shells would have split open and the tide would have washed them out to sea. I think I told you that the tide makes up in the cave through some opening that we didn't see. So, that's why I didn't really expect to find any pearls in the cave."

"Then you just took a long chance?" Jack asked.

"Not quite so long as you think, perhaps, although I might as well confess that it's a chance all right."

"You mean—"

"I mean that, although those particular pearls are undoubtedly gone, I hope to find others."

"Where?" Bob asked.

"In the water just off the head of the island."

"But what makes you think there are any oysters there?"

"I saw some there when I was here before, and for another thing, I believe that whoever hid those oysters in there gathered them close by. These

natives around here are a mighty lazy lot as a rule and, for that reason, I figure that they didn't find them a great ways off."

"But where—"

"So when I outfitted the boat," Mr. Lakewood went on ignoring the interruption, "I included some oyster rakes and to-morrow we're going oyster hunting."

"How about a diving suit?" Jack asked.

"Well, to tell the truth, we've got a first class outfit on board but, unless the water's deeper off the end there than I think, we won't need it."

"Looks as though you had thought of about everything," Bob grinned.

"Had to. You see, it's too far to go back for something you forgot to bring," his uncle smiled.

"How about this afternoon?" Bob asked.

"No, we're not going to start till to-morrow; the old man needs this afternoon to get rested up in after that tramp."

"Didn't I tell you he had something up his sleeve?" Bob asked a little later after they had finished dinner and their uncle had announced that he was going to his cabin for a nap. The two boys were sitting beneath the awning on the forward deck and chafing under the enforced delay.

"Well, I didn't bet against it, did I?" Jack returned. "Reckon I suspected it as much as you did."

For half an hour they sat and talked about the coming oyster hunt and again thrashed over the adventure of the morning. Several times Bob had yawned and finally Jack advised him to go and take a nap.

"Believe I will," he said, getting up from his chair. "Coming along?"

"I'm not sleepy," Jack returned in a disgusted tone. "I use my nights for that purpose," he added turning his eyes toward the southern end of the island.

As Bob started for the cabin Jack arose and leaned on the rail. "Just a minute, Bob," he said, and Bob quickly returned to his side.

"What is it?"

"Look over there just at the top of that knoll."

"I don't see anything."

"Keep your eyes glued on it while I get the glasses," Jack ordered. "I saw something move there."

He was back in less than a minute. "Seen anything?" he asked.

"Lots of sand," Bob replied.

For a minute Jack gazed through the glasses and then handed them to Bob.

"Look just to the right," he ordered.

"It's nothing but a stump," Bob said after taking a long look.

"Stump, your eye."

Jack snatched the glass from his hand and looked again.

"It was moving when I looked before," he said as he handed them back to his brother.

"And it is now," Bob declared excitedly a moment later. "It's either a man or—or—"

"Or something else," Jack finished the sentence.

"It must be a man. No other animal would crawl along like that."

"But what's he trying to do?"

"Trying not to let us see him, I'd say."

"Of course, smarty, but what's he after?"

"Probably wants to find out something about us."

"Well, he's coming in the right direction if he does."

"He's stopped now," Bob announced a moment later. "Now he's crawling back."

"Reckon he didn't find out much."

"He's gone over the knoll, now."

For nearly an hour they watched the distant knoll but the object did not again appear.

"How about that nap?" Jack asked.

"Nothing doing."

"Then I'll beat you a game of checkers."

"You mean you'll try."

They played checkers until supper time and, to Jack's great joy, he was two games ahead when the

bell rang. During the meal they told their uncle and the captain what they had seen.

"And you think it was a man?" Captain Ole asked, when they had finished.

"I'm not sure," Bob replied, "but it looked more like a man to me than anything else. It was too far to be sure."

"Well, whatever it is we'll have to look out for it," Mr. Lakewood declared. "It evidently doesn't like our company."

It was sometime during the night when the boys were awakened by the noise of what sounded like a fight just outside their cabin.

"What the dickens!" Bob cried as he jumped from his bunk wide awake.

He pulled open the door and rushed out on deck closely followed by Jack. There, close to the rail, two figures were locked in each others arms and swaying this way and that, while loud hoarse grunts came from one or both of them. For an instant the boys hesitated as though uncertain what to do. Then, with a loud shout to Jack to "come on" Bob sprang forward. Only a few feet separated him from the fighters but, before he could reach them, one was hurled violently to the deck while the other, with a wild bellow of rage, leaped for the rail and disappeared over the side. A loud splash followed as he struck the water.

Knowing that it would be too dark to see a swimming object in the water, Bob quickly turned to the man who was lying motionless on the deck.

"It's Pat," he cried, as he turned him over.

"What's all the rumpus?" Mr. Lakewood asked the question as he came running toward them.

"It's Pat," Jack told him. "Something threw him down and then jumped overboard."

"Is he dead?" Mr. Lakewood asked anxiously.

"Only got the wind knocked out of him, I think," Bob, who was working Pat's arms up and down, replied.

After what seemed a long time the breath slowly came back to the mate's lungs and, finally, he was able to speak.

"Thot makes twice," were the first words he gasped.

"Take it easy a bit," Bob cautioned helping him to his feet.

By this time Captain Ole and two of the sailors had joined the party and, after waiting a few minutes until he had fully recovered his wind, Pat told them what had happened.

"Faith an' it's meself as was standin' by the railin' thar lookin' out over the water, whin some-thin' grabbed me from fornist before I had time ter turn. He got his arm around me neck an' all but had me wind shut off fer a minute. But I got me

neck free an' we wint at it. But it's meself as'll tell the world he's strong. Sure an' I'm some scrapper meself but that guy'd had me if the byes had'n scared him off so he would."

"And you heard nothing before he tackled you?" Mr. Lakewood asked.

"Niver a bit."

"You think it was a man?"

"Sure an' whot else could it uv bin?"

"How about a big monkey?" Captain Ole asked.

"Well, it moight have bin a monkey but it's me bet it was a man, an' as I said before, ut's the second time. First he hit me wid a nut an' thin he knocks the wind out uv me. Oh, he's got sumpin comin' ter him all right an' don't yer fergit ut."

"Hope I'll be there to see it," Jack told him.

"An' it's some fight yer'll see if yer are," Pat promised him.

"I should have thought you could tell by the feeling whether it was a man or a monkey," Captain Ole said.

"Well, the thing was hairy enough ter be a monkey if thot's whot yer mane," Pat told him.

"And the noise he made sounded more like a monkey than a man to me," Bob added.

"But fer all thot I'm bettin' 'twas a man," Pat insisted. "Sure an' I niver heard yit uv a monkey

swimmin' an' thot feller must've swum out here from the shore."

"Well, I reckon he's gone for to-night whatever it was," Captain Ole said. "I'll stay up the rest of the night and the rest of you'd better get back to bed."

"Nuttin' uv the sort. I'll finish out me watch," Pat insisted.

"It'll be light now in about an hour and you'd better get a little sleep after that jolt," the captain told him.

But the mate refused to leave his trick and, after a little more arguing, it was decided that both the captain and the mate would stay up.

"He might come back and it'll take two to watch the boat securely in the darkness," Captain Ole said.

The boys went back to bed but were too excited to sleep and, after talking together for a while, they decided to get dressed and join the captain and Pat on deck.

"So you thought we might need protection, eh," Captain Ole laughed as they joined him on the bridge a few minutes later.

"Not that, sir, but we couldn't get to sleep again and it's mighty hot in there so we thought we might's well call it a night," Bob told him.

"Well I'm mighty glad of your company anyhow."

The rest of the night passed without incident and,

as soon as breakfast was over, the following morning, the anchorage of the Valkyrie was changed to a position about two hundred yards off the north end of the island. Here they found the water but a little more than five fathoms deep and it was then high tide.

"It'll be shallow enough to use the rakes for at least a hundred yards off shore when the tide goes out," Mr. Lakewood declared as the anchor touched bottom.

"Hadn't we better be getting the rakes ready?" Bob asked.

"Sure we will, right away."

He gave the order to a couple of the sailors and they went below and soon returned carrying four of the rakes in their arms. They were about twelve feet long, each rake consisting of two poles bolted together about four feet from one end, which had fastened to it a curved jaw fitted with long teeth. These jaws when shut made a kind of basket capable of holding a peck or more of oysters.

"They're more like a big pair of pliers than a rake," Jack said as the sailors laid them down on the deck.

"But they call them rakes just the same," his uncle told him.

"How soon can we have a try with them?" Bob asked.

"Right away if you want to."

"I'll say we do," Jack declared.

"All right, then, we'll start in near shore where the water's shallow enough to work out as the tide recedes."

"Gee, but I hope they're thick," Jack said as his uncle ordered two of the small boats lowered.

It was quickly arranged that the two boys and their uncle would take one boat while Pat and two of the sailors went in the other.

"The one what gleets the first loyster velly slure gleets two pieces of plie for dinner," Wong told them as they started down the ladder.

"You save 'em for me, Wong," Jack shouted back.

"All lightee," Wong told him.

At high tide the water lapped against the cliff and it was not until they were within a few feet of the land that they found the water shallow enough for their purpose.

"All right now, one of you in either end," Mr. Lakewood said as he ceased rowing. "I guess you know how to work the things without being shown."

"Seeing there's only one possible way I reckon we do," Bob assured him.

"Then go to it and remember the reward," he laughed.

"Those two pieces of pie are as good as under

my belt right now," Jack declared as he stood up in the bow and lowered the rake into the water. "Gee, but I've got something," he added a moment later after he had opened the rake as wide as possible and then slowly closed it. "I must have a bushel," he continued as hand over hand he pulled in the load.

Jack's rake was nearly full sure enough but, after he had dumped the contents onto the bottom of the boat, he was greatly chagrined to find that he had brought up nothing but stones.

"There's where you lose the pie," Bob taunted as he swung his load over the edge of the boat.

But he too had brought up nothing but stones.

"I'll get that pie yet," Jack laughed as he finished throwing his stones back in the water and lowered his rake a second time.

But for fully half an hour they raked the bottom of the ocean, as Jack put it, and nothing but stones rewarded their efforts. And the men in the other boat had no better luck.

"I reckon we're in too near shore," Mr. Lakewood declared as he noted that the boys were getting rather discouraged. "After dinner the tide will be out and we may have better luck."

"Here's hoping," Jack said as he dumped another load of stones into the boat.

"But let's not give up yet," Bob said throwing the last of his last failure over the side of the boat.

"I got a stone that time which looks something like an oyster."

"Then we must be getting warm," Jack laughed.

So for another half hour they persisted working gradually further from the island as the tide receded. Then, just as they were about to return to the ship for dinner, Jack brought up the first shell.

"Hurrah!" he shouted as his quick eye spied the bivalve among the load of stones he had dumped. "I told you that pie belonged to me."

It wasn't much of an oyster, as Bob told him, and there was no pearl in it, but Jack insisted that even so it was worth two pieces of pie.

"And where there's one there's bound to be more," he exulted. Before they had time to try again the dinner gong sounded and, much against their inclination, they had to hurry back.

"We'll fill the boat after dinner," Jack declared as he took the oars and started to row back to the Valkyrie.

Jack got his two pieces of pie and Wong, seeing the wistful look on Bob's face, gave him an extra piece as well.

"You'll have to earn that after dinner," Jack told him.

When they started in again after dinner the tide was more than two-thirds out and a strip of sand showed at the foot of the cliff. They began opera-

tions at about the same place where they had left off and, after a few trials Bob brought up the second oyster.

"There, that's a real oyster," he announced as he picked it out from the stones.

"It's big enough to hold a good sized pearl at any rate," Mr. Lakewood smiled as he reached out his hand for it.

With his oyster knife he quickly opened it and, to their great joy, found a pearl about the size of a small pea.

"Not very large but it's a good one," he told them.

"Think it would buy two pieces of pie?" Bob asked.

"You had the pie anyhow," Jack reminded him.

"Well, you can't say I haven't earned it now," Bob retorted with a grin.

It was an hour before they found another pearl although they pulled in one or more oysters with nearly every haul.

"It must have taken whoever covered the floor of that cave some time unless he found them thicker than we are," Jack declared after he had dumped two loads of stones without a single oyster.

"I believe we'll strike them thicker somewhere around here," Mr. Lakewood said. "I think the others are doing better than we are," he added.

"Let's paddle over and see," Bob suggested.

The other boat was some hundred feet distant and the two men who were handling the rakes seemed to be putting a good deal of enthusiasm in their work as Mr. Lakewood paddled toward them.

"How's tricks?" Bob called when they were only a few feet distant.

"Coming in pretty fast now," Pat, who was sitting in the middle of the boat, answered.

"Found any pearls?" Jack asked.

"Six."

"Six?"

"Faith an' thot's whot I said an' here's another," and the mate held up a pearl nearly as large as the end of his thumb.

"You've got us licked by five," Bob told him as the two boats touched.

It was evident that they had struck the bed for, as one of the sailors pulled in his rake, they could see that it was nearly filled with oysters.

"Why didn't you tell us you'd struck them?" Bob demanded.

"Faith an' it's only a minute thot we hit 'em thick. It's meself as was jest goin' ter shout ter yer whin I seed yer comin'."

The boys pitched in with renewed effort and soon had the oysters coming in thick and fast.

"I'll say these are real oysters," Jack laughed as he dumped a rake full of them in the boat.

"If the pearls are there and of a size in proportion we'll be all right," Bob added.

The oysters were now coming in much faster than Mr. Lakewood could open them although he was working as rapidly as possible.

"Here's a good one," he announced soon after they had started work in the new place.

"I'll say it is," Jack laughed. "Just keep 'em a-coming."

They worked industriously until the bell called them back for supper and, as soon as the meal was over, they finished opening the remainder of the oysters, a task which kept them busy until dark. As a result of the day's work they found that they had gathered thirty-three pearls, many of them of good size and three were very large.

"What do you suppose they're worth?" Bob asked as he threw the last of the shells overboard.

"Well, I'm not much of an expert at valuing them but I'd say we've got close on to two thousand dollars' worth."

"You mean it?" Jack gasped.

"I believe it'll run over that amount rather than under it," his uncle assured him.

"But isn't it unusual to find them so thick?" Bob asked.

"Indeed it is. I happen to know that as a usual

thing not more than one oyster in a thousand has a pearl in it and probably not that."

"Then what makes them so thick in these fellows?" Bob asked.

"I'm not sure, of course, but, you know, it is thought that a pearl comes from a grain of sand getting into the oyster's shell and setting up an irritation. Now, you may not have noticed it, but these oysters are slightly different from those we're used to not only in size but in shape as well. Their shells are more nearly round and are slightly rougher. My theory is that this kind of oyster, for some reason which I can't explain, is more liable to the pearl disease than any other varieties."

"It's a good theory, I'll say," Bob agreed.

"And let's hope they don't get over it in a hurry," Jack added.

"Get over what?" Bob asked.

"Why, that irritation that makes pearls," Jack laughed.

CHAPTER XII.

A DARING ATTEMPT.

THERE was much excitement on board the Val-kyrie that night when the result of the day's work was made known to those who had remained on the boat. The next day four boats were sent out and over a hundred pearls, many of good size and but few small enough to be of little value, were brought back as a result of the day's efforts.

"Begorra an' we'll all be millionaires in a few days at this rate," Pat declared as he gazed at the pile of pearls as they formed a little heap on the cabin table.

"If there's only enough of them," Bob warned him.

"Well, the ocean's big enough ter hold a whole lot of 'em," the mate shot back.

The boys as well as the others, who had taken part in the work, were tired enough to go to bed almost as soon as supper was over and, before nine o'clock, all was quiet on board. But it was some time before the two boys went to sleep. The disappearance of the man, Josh Kelley, had given them matter for much thought and they realized that, fortunate as

they had been in many respects, yet a grave danger threatened them. That Josh was in league with someone against them was almost a certainty and, then again, the creature, man or beast, that had made the attack on Pat, was another cause for anxiety.

"Something seems to tell me that we're going to hear from Josh before many moons," Bob said as he turned out the light.

"Oh, quit hanging crepe," Jack growled as he turned over.

But, a moment later he reopened the subject and, for nearly an hour, they talked in low tones. But, finally, they fell off to sleep and, it seemed to Bob, who was a light sleeper, that it was but a moment later when he awoke to hear the sound of voices just outside the door. He listened a moment and had no trouble in recognizing the deep tones of Captain Ole. Who he was talking with he could not tell as the other's voice was too low to carry distinctly.

"It's coming this way," he heard the captain say.

"He could not hear the reply to the statement but, a moment later the captain spoke again.

"It's probably he."

To Bob "he" could mean but one man and, getting quietly out of his bunk, he stole across the room and shook his brother gently.

"Huh?" Jack grunted.

"Get awake," Bob ordered.

"What's up?"

"You'd better be."

By this time Jack was wide awake and, in a low whisper, Bob told him what he had heard.

"Think we'd better butt in?" Jack asked when he had finished.

"Well, I suppose Captain Ole will call us if he wants us but I don't believe he'd care if we got dressed and went out."

"Let's make it snappy, then," Jack whispered as he began to pull on his clothes.

Evidently the men had moved to some other part of the boat for, although they listened while dressing, they heard nothing. But, in a very few minutes they were out on the deck. There was no one in sight and they hurried to the bridge where they found the captain and the new second mate talking earnestly together.

"What's the matter?" Captain Ole asked as Bob, who was in the lead, stepped onto the bridge.

"That's what we wanted to find out, sir," he replied.

"But what made you think anything was the matter?"

"Why, I heard you talking outside our door."

"You did? Then you must be a light sleeper."

"I believe I am," Bob acknowledged.

"Well, I didn't mean to wake you, that is not yet," the captain said, "but, seeing that you're awake, I suppose you might's well know. There's a boat of some kind coming this way, or at any rate, it was coming this way a few minutes ago."

"But I didn't see any light," Bob told him.

"No, they doused their glim just as we moved away from your door," the captain told them.

"You think it's Josh?" Jack asked.

"Well, of course I don't know that it is but who else would be sailing around here? It might be someone else but, if I were to bet on it, I reckon you can guess which way it would be."

"Hadn't we better put out our lights?" Jack asked.

"No use now," Captain Ole told him. "They know where we are without a doubt."

"How about using a searchlight?" Bob suggested.

"That's a good idea and one I was just thinking of putting into practice. It will prevent them getting within a mile or two of us without us seeing them."

The searchlight of the Valkyrie was a powerful one and soon its broad ray was sweeping the ocean but, for a long time it failed to disclose anything.

"Maybe it wasn't a boat at all," Jack suggested after they had been using the light for nearly a half hour.

"And maybe they gave it up," Bob added.

"Maybe, and then again, maybe," Captain Ole smiled.

"What's the idea?"

The question came from the foot of the stairway leading to the bridge, and was followed by Mr. Lakewood, who came up rubbing his eyes as though only half awake.

"Did the light wake you up?" Bob asked.

"No, I couldn't get to sleep it's so pesky hot in there so I came out to see if I could find a cooler place and the first thing I saw was that light dancing all over the water. Trying to advertise our location?"

"Captain Ole saw a light and thinks that Josh Kelley's coming with his crew or whatever he's got," Bob explained.

"Hum, I see. Picked him up?"

"Not yet," Captain Ole told him.

"Nor you won't either now that he knows that we know he's coming," Mr. Lakewood said shaking his head.

"Just turn the light a bit more to the right, please," Jack said suddenly.

"See something?"

"I thought so," Jack returned as the beam of light swung slowly back again.

"There he is," Bob exclaimed a second later.

"I see it," Mr. Lakewood added. "What do you make of it, Cap'n?"

"It's a bigger boat than the Valkyrie," Captain Ole declared.

"Which isn't saying such an awful lot so far's size is concerned," Jack added.

"No, but size doesn't always count for so much when it comes to a scrap," Bob reminded him.

Captain Ole was all the time keeping the beam of light trained on the distant boat and they could see that it was coming toward them at a rapid rate and soon it was evident that Captain Ole's statement regarding her size was correct. She was nearly a quarter longer than the Valkyrie, and, judging from the speed with which she seemed to be approaching, was fully her equal, if not her superior in point of sailing quality.

"She's burning the water some," Jack declared.

"You've got your figure of speech twisted a bit," Bob laughed, "but if you mean that the boat approaching is making fair, not to say rapid, progress, I quite agree with you."

"I think it would be a good plan to call all hands," Mr. Lakewood suggested. "She'll be on us in less than fifteen minutes."

"You think they'll make trouble?" Captain Ole asked.

"That fellow Josh has no other object in life and

if he's on that boat, believe me, he's out for trouble."

"Well, I reckon he's coming to a good place for it," Captain Ole smiled grimly as he gave the order to summon all hands on deck.

"Now boys," he began as soon as they were all before him except MacDonald who was below getting up steam in case they should want to get away quickly, "don't start anything unless I give the word. They may be looking for trouble and then again they may not and we'll match them either way. But if I do give the word to mix it up let's go at in man fashion."

"I reckon we know what yer mane," one of the sailors grinned while the others nodded in agreement.

"How's your steam?" the captain called down the speaking tube.

"Be ready to start in ten minutes if you want to," MacDonald called back.

"Good! We probably won't want to run but it's fine to know that we can."

By this time the other boat was less than a hundred rods away and all could hear the order to reverse and, in another five minutes, the order to let go the anchor, followed. Bob noted that it was just three o'clock as he heard the splash of the anchor.

"They'll know that they aren't going to catch us

napping," he said as he thrust the watch back in his pocket.

"It'll begin to get light in less than an hour and I reckon they'll wait till then before starting anything." Captain Ole told them.

He had switched off the searchlight but the boat was so near that it was visible to them as it was painted white and the darkness was relieved by the light of a new moon and the stars which thickly studded the sky. Of course it was too dark for them to tell what was going on on board the stranger but they trusted to their ears to tell them if a small boat were approaching. So they watched and listened until the first faint glow of light in the east told them that a new day was about to break, and there had been no sign of visitors. In fact it was not until they had eaten breakfast that a boat was lowered from the side of the ship and they knew that something was about to happen. They had watched closely every minute except when eating and, even then, a part of the crew was constantly on the lookout. They knew by this time that their visitor was well supplied with a crew and that a number of them were natives, although there were at least three white men on board.

Four men, two of them white, descended the rope ladder and got into the row boat and the two blacks pulled rapidly toward the Valkyrie.

"Neither one of them is Josh," Captain Ole declared when they were about half way to the Valkyrie.

"But that isn't saying that he isn't on board," Mr. Lakewood told him.

"Oh, I reckon he's not far away," Captain Ole agreed.

"Valkyrie, ahoy."

"On board the ship," Captain Ole answered the hail.

"May we come on board?"

The man who asked permission was a large well built man, his face nearly covered with a thick black beard.

"I reckon," Captain Ole replied not ungraciously.

The boat pulled up alongside and soon the two white men were on board.

"Well, what can we do for you?" Captain Ole asked as the two seemed to wait as though expecting him to speak.

"Do you know who we are?" asked the smaller of the two, a man about thirty years of age, dressed in white duck.

"Can't say I do," Captain Ole assured him.

"Then permit me to introduce myself and my friend here, I am Captain LeBlanc and this is Lieutenant Coua."

"And I am Captain Olsen and this is Mr. Lake-

wood, the owner of the Valkyrie and these are his nephews, Bob and Jack Lakewood," Captain Ole told them.

"I am sorry to inconvenience you, but I have orders to search your ship," Captain LeBlanc then informed them.

"Orders from whom?" Captain Ole demanded.

"From the French government."

"Let me see them."

"The orders, you mean?"

"Certainly."

"Did you bring those papers," the captain asked turning to the lieutenant.

The latter fumbled for a moment in his pockets and then declared that he must have left them behind.

"Then I reckon you'll have to go and get them," Captain Ole informed him.

"You mean you will insist on seeing the papers before you will permit us to make the search."

"You guessed it the first time."

"But—"

"There's no buts about it. How do I know that you are what you represent yourselves to be?"

"You have my word," the captain declared trying to throw into his voice a note of surprise.

"That's all right so far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough."

"You mean you doubt my word," the man bristled.

"Not necessarily. It means simply that I don't know you and that I refuse to allow you or any one else to search this boat without showing the proper papers."

There was decision in the captain's voice and the other, turning to his companion, said something to him in a strange language and in a tone too low for them to catch even had they understood it. The larger man nodded his head as though in agreement with what the other had said. Then the smaller man, turning back to Captain Ole, said:

"You will regret this."

"What's that?" Captain Ole snapped.

"I said you would regret your decision."

"Is that a threat?"

In reply the man merely shrugged his shoulders and Captain Ole, for the first time since the voyage had begun, nearly, if not quite, lost his temper.

"I allow no one to threaten me on board my own ship," he snapped, "and the sooner you get off her the better I'll like it."

"Very well, we go but we return," the man said with an ominous shake of his head.

He turned and, followed by the larger man, stepped toward the companionway.

"Just a minute."

Mr. Lakewood spoke for the first time, and the man, who had called himself a captain, turned with an expectant look on his face.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Do you know a man by the name of Josh Kelley?" Mr. Lakewood asked slowly.

"No."

The man snapped out the word as though he had had it all ready before the question was asked.

"Then he isn't on board your boat?"

"Naturally I would know him if he were."

"Hum, I suppose that's so," Mr. Lakewood said as he turned away.

"Of course he was lying," Captain Ole said as soon as the two men had left the boat.

"Of course," Mr. Lakewood agreed.

"What do you think they'll do?" Bob asked.

"Hard to tell," Captain Ole replied with a shake of his head which betrayed the fact that he was worried.

"I reckon it's their move," Jack suggested.

"Yes, all we can do is to wait till we see what that move is," his uncle agreed. "Of course we can't rake any oysters while they're around, that's sure."

"See that thing in the bow of their boat?" Bob asked Jack a little later as they were leaning on the rail watching the other boat.

"You mean that thing covered with canvas?"

"Yep."

"Sure, I see it. What do you think it is?"

"Just what you're thinking," Bob grinned.

"Well, if it's what I think it is it's no laughing matter."

"I wasn't laughing. But say what you think it is."

"It's a rapid fire gun."

"Go to the head of the class."

"Then you agree?"

"Absolutely."

"And if it comes to a fight you think they'd be too much for us?"

"With that gun? I sure do."

"Well, it does look kind of bad for us. I wish there was some way that we could get at the thing and put it out of commission," Jack returned wistfully.

"Which we could do in about one minute if we could only get at it, but, of course it would be impossible in broad daylight. If it was only in the night we might take a boat and get up on their anchor chains and get away with it."

"But if they're going to use it they'll probably do it before night."

"I guess there's little doubt about that," Bob agreed. "But where's the island?" he asked suddenly.

Jack turned to look. "Fog" he declared

"So it is and it's blotted it out all right. I'll bet you could cut it."

"And it'll be on us in a minute, and—"

"And what?"

"And if it's thick enough it'll give you a chance," Jack finished.

"You mean—?"

"That we've got to disable that gun."

"It'll be taking a big chance," Bob reminded him.

"Don't I know it?" Jack retorted. "But if we don't we're licked before we start, that is, if they mean business."

By this time the fog had shut down on the boat and it was, as Bob, had said, almost thick enough to cut. Although they were standing only three or four feet apart, they could hardly see each other in another five minutes.

"What do you say?" Jack whispered impatiently.

"I—I reckon it's up to us."

"Good! Come on then, there's no time to lose. No knowing how long it'll last."

"But we've got to be mighty careful about getting away. If Captain Ole or Uncle get wise they may not let us go."

"Well, they're both up in the wheel house and all the crew are below except Pat and he was fixing

something or other out in the stern a few minutes ago, so I reckon, the coast is clear."

"What boat'll we take?"

"This one right here is as handy as any, I guess," Jack replied. "If only the ropes don't creak when we lower it."

"If it wasn't for the sharks we could swim it and not make a bit of noise."

"I know, but it would be sure death to try that so it's out of the question. It's the boat or nothing."

They worked carefully and, although the rope creaked at times loudly enough to make them expect the captain or their uncle would, at any moment, come down to see what was up, they finally felt the rope slacken and knew that they had succeeded so far at least. The fog was, if anything, thicker than ever as they quickly slid down the rope and, in another minute, they were off.

"Not a sound with those oars, now," Bob cautioned as he picked up a paddle.

"Maybe you'd better paddle," Jack suggested. "These oar locks have got the squeaks."

"Ship, 'em then," Bob ordered. "I guess I can manage it."

The fog was now so dense that Bob had to rely entirely on his sense of direction but, fortunately, he was very good at keeping a straight line in the dark. Jack was in the bow straining his eyes for

all he was worth in an effort to pierce the fog but, as he afterward confided to Bob, he might as well have kept them closed. He was unable to see a foot ahead of the boat.

"Don't you think we ought to be about there?" he whispered after Bob had been paddling for some moments.

"Listen," Bob ordered as he stopped paddling.

"She's off to the left," Jack declared almost immediately as the faint sound of voices reached his sharp ears.

"I hear them," Bob replied and, once more the paddle bit into the water.

"S-s-s-h," Jack cautioned, a moment later.

Bob again stopped paddling and, almost at once, Jack whispered: "I've got hold of the chain."

Before starting they had settled the question as to who was to make the attempt. Jack had insisted that he could do it with less noise than his brother, but Bob had reminded him that he was more careful and had finally flatly refused to go unless he would agree to let him make the try and Jack, knowing that he meant what he said, had reluctantly given in.

"Now, remember," Bob reminded him, "if I get pinched you're to put back for the boat and tell them what's up."

“I understand, but you’re not going to get pinched,” Jack encouraged him.

Slowly foot by foot Bob worked his way up the chain, not making the slightest noise, and soon reached the side of the boat. And now came the crucial moment. Could he reach up far enough to grasp the rail and swing himself over? That was a question he had been asking himself ever since they left the Valkyrie. He had not noticed, before the fog came, how far from the deck were the anchor holes and he knew that were they too far down it would be impossible for him to get aboard in that way.

Fortunately the links of the chain were large and, with a prayer in his heart, he gripped it firmly with his feet and, inch by inch, began to raise himself up against the side of the ship. Higher and higher crept his fingers until he knew that he could reach but an inch or two farther. Then, to his unbounded joy, they closed over a rod. It was very fortunate that he was the athlete he was, else he never could have drawn himself up and, as it was, it required every ounce of strength he possessed. But finally he succeeded in getting one foot over and the rest was easy so far as getting aboard was concerned.

As he lay, close to the railing, to recover his wind,

he could hear two men talking in low tones and tried his best to catch what they were saying. But they were too far away or were talking in too low a tone, he was not sure which, for him to catch so much as a single word. He had the location of the gun well in mind and knew that it was about a dozen feet from where he was lying and, as soon as he was breathing easily again, he began to hitch his body toward it. There was not a breath of air stirring and the silence was so intense that he knew the slightest sound might betray his presence. But, on the other hand, he realized that haste was important as the fog might lift at any time. Still, as long as it remained calm, he had but little apprehension on that score.

As he worked himself along the voices became more distinct and, by the time his hand touched the base of the gun, he could tell that they were not more than ten or twelve feet away. Fortunately he was familiar with most models of machine guns, having had much practice with them at The Fortress, so he knew just what he was after, provided it was one with which he was acquainted. Carefully he reached up under the canvas and his heart jumped as his fingers touched a familiar thumb screw. Quickly unscrewing it he drew out a bolt without which he knew the gun would be useless. Working quickly but noiselessly he unscrewed and transferred

to his pocket several other small parts until, satisfied that the gun was permanently out of commission unless they had a full complement of extra parts, which he doubted, he began to edge his way back.

The thought as to whether he would be able to locate the anchor chain with his feet had been giving him considerable concern but, before he reached the railing, an interruption came with a suddenness that was, to say the least, disconcerting. He thought he must be nearly to the place where he had come over and was reaching out with his hand to feel for the rod when his fingers closed on an ankle.

"What the Sam Hill!"

The man jerked his foot away and Bob held his breath. How he had gotten past him without his knowledge was more than the boy could figure out, but he was there and that was enough for the time being. Should he be discovered and captured it would, he knew, be a most serious matter, not only for him, but for the others as well, as they would doubtless hold him as a hostage to accomplish their ends. All this ran through his mind like lightning as he waited to see what move the man would make. It seemed a long time, but in reality, was only a matter of seconds, before he reached down and his powerful hand grasped the boy by his right shoulder.

"What yer doin' creepin' down thar like a bloomin' snake?" he demanded.

Bob did not dare reply fearing that his accent would betray him but he realized that silence would be a no less sure cause for suspicion.

"Why don't yer answer?" the man boomed in a loud voice which must have been audible all over the boat.

And then Bob acted. Reaching with both hands he grabbed the man's ankle and with a sudden jerk pulled his feet from beneath him and he came down with a loud grunt of surprise. At the same instance another gruff voice boomed out only a few feet away.

"Wot's the matter, Jake?"

Hurrying feet warned Bob that to make a get-away he must act quickly but, as he sprang to his feet, the man, who had evidently managed to turn onto his side, grabbed one of his feet. A sudden hard tug freed the foot but at the same instant another hand, belonging to another man, caught hold of his arm and, for an instant, he almost gave up hope of escape. The fog was not quite so dense now and he could see that the man who had grabbed him was a large and powerful fellow.

"Hold him, Bill," cried the man from the floor.

"I got him."

But he was mistaken for, even as he spoke, Bob freed his arm with a strong jerk and, before the man could renew his hold, he reached the rail, only

four or five feet away, and, without hesitating an instant, dove head first into the sea. No thought of sharks entered his mind until he struck the water, then the thought that he had escaped one danger only to fall into another even more menacing sent a chill through his heart. Every instant, as he struggled to the surface, he expected to feel the sharp teeth of a man-eater close on one of his legs. But he did not lose hope and, as his head bobbed out of the water, he gave a low call.

“Jack!”

There was no answer and his heart sank as he thought that probably, in accordance with their agreement, Jack had started back for the Valkyrie, having heard the noise of the struggle on deck and supposing that he was a prisoner. Had it not been for the sharks he would not have cared as he was a strong swimmer and the boat was not far away. And now he was undecided whether to strike out and risk the sharks or to climb up the anchor chain again. The latter would, he knew, be safer, for the time being at least, but the fog was now lifting perceptibly and it could be only a matter of a short time before he would be discovered. Having escaped from them by such a narrow margin he hated to deliver himself back into their hands and had about decided to risk the sharks when the faint sound of a paddle dipping into the water reached him and, al-

most at the same instant, through the thinning fog, he caught sight of the row boat about twenty feet away.

"This way, Jack," he cried, determined to make him hear even though it revealed his presence to those on board the ship.

Jack heard his call and in another moment he was climbing over the stern, wet but, for the moment, thankful that he had, at least, escaped the sharks.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXCITING FINISH.

"I THOUGHT you'd gone back," were the first words Bob spoke as he grabbed Jack's hand.

"I know, but I hated to leave you in their hands," Jack told him.

"But you should have gone, although between you and me and the fence post, I'm mighty glad you didn't."

Bob had been picked up with the large boat between them and the Valkyrie and, while they were talking, Jack had been paddling as hard as he could, to put as much distance between them and their enemies as possible.

Although it has taken some time to tell it, probably not more than two minutes had elapsed from the time Bob had struck the water until he was in the boat. Nothing had been heard from those on board and he supposed they had rushed to the cabin for weapons, so it behooved them to get beyond their range in the least possible time.

"Seems to me the fog's getting thicker again,"

Jack declared after he had paddled for about five minutes.

"Sure is," Bob agreed.

"Well, it's a good thing for us. They'd probably try a shot or two in our direction if they could see us."

"No doubt of that, but which way you going?"

"Back to the island, of course."

"You sure?"

"I think so. I swung around her bow, and unless I've turned again, we must be right."

"Well, I hope so, but I guess it'll be safe to take the oars now," Bob said as he picked them up from the bottom of the boat and slipped them into the locks.

The fog was now almost as thick as before and they could see only a very short distance, but Bob rowed with all his might while Jack helped with the paddle.

"Ought to be about there, don't you think?" the latter asked after a few minutes had passed.

"If we're going in the right direction," Bob replied.

"Don't you think we are?"

"Frankly I haven't the least idea."

"You haven't?" There was a note of alarm in the question.

"No, I'm completely turned around," Bob confessed.

"Well we're safe away from those fellows at any rate. By the way, I never thought to ask you how you came out with the gun."

"They won't use it this trip, unless they've got a lot of extra parts."

"That's good, but what happened?"

Bob gave him account of his adventure and when he had finished, Jack said: "Gee, but you did have a close one."

"Too close for comfort," Bob agreed grimly. "But, I say, Jack, we've missed the boat and the island as well. We've gone a good deal too far," he added as he rested on his oars.

"Just what I was thinking. Well, what's the answer?"

"Listen."

"Don't hear a thing."

"Think we'd better risk a shout?"

"Reckon it wouldn't do any harm. We must be quite a ways from that other boat."

"Unless we've been rowing in a circle."

"I say risk it."

"All right, then, here goes. On board the Val-kyrie."

Bob gave the call several times, each time a little

louder until, at the last, he was shouting with about all his lung power. But there was no answer.

"Gee, we must be half way back to the United States if they didn't hear that last one," Jack declared.

"Or to Australia," Bob added.

"Well, I guess about the only thing to do is to do nothing till this fog lets up."

"I reckon so. There's no use in getting any farther away and I guess we're safe enough here."

An hour passed and there was no diminution in the density of the fog. Save for a gentle swell the sea was perfectly calm.

"We aren't going anywhere very fast," Bob laughed after a long period of silence.

"Not unless there's a current here."

"Wonder if they've missed us yet?"

"What time is it?"

"One o'clock."

"Then they've missed us all right. It's past time for dinner."

Another hour went by and the fog was as dense as ever. The gentle rise and fall of the boat had lulled Jack to sleep and Bob was having hard work to keep awake when a slight sound caught his ear.

"That's the surf," he said half aloud as he picked up the oars and began rowing toward the sound.

Shortly he was sure he was right as the sound

came nearer and, after rowing for perhaps twenty minutes, the boat, carried forward by the swell, ran up onto the sand and, as the wave receded, came to a sudden stop.

The jar awoke Jack and he sat up rubbing his eyes.

"Did we hit the United States?" he asked.

"We've hit something," Bob laughed as he jumped from the boat and as the next wave hit, pulled it up a little farther.

"What part of the world do you suppose this is?" Jack asked as he tried in vain to pierce the fog.

"I imagine it's our island all right. We surely didn't go far enough to hit anything else. But I think I feel a little breeze and it'll probably blow the fog away pretty soon."

He was right for, in a very few minutes, the fog began to lighten and in another fifteen minutes it was practically gone.

"They sure come quick and go quick," Jack declared. "Do you recognize the place?"

"I think so. That's the grove where we heard the wild man of Borneo or whatever it was."

"Then we're away round the other end from the boat?"

"I reckon that's it, and we'd better be moving. Uncle Si'll be worried stiff about us."

"Going to row?"

"Of course. There's no use in leaving the boat here. Help me get her in the water."

They had just taken hold of the boat to push it out on the next wave when they heard that cry which had so startled them a few days before. And now it was only a short distance away. Only a strip of sand some thirty feet wide separated them from the woods and they knew that the creature must be very near the edge of it.

"Make it snappy," Bob cried as the wave struck the boat.

The boat slid out without much difficulty and, as soon as the water was up to their knees, they clambered in.

"Look," Jack cried as Bob picked up the oars.

Bob turned his head and saw what had caused Jack's alarm. Coming toward them from the woods was a creature, fierce enough in appearance to frighten the bravest, but whether it was a man or a beast, he could not say. Well over six feet high and with short stocky legs and long arms, reaching nearly to its knees, it stooped forward as it ran. It was clad in some sort of skin but whether its own or another animal's was another thing impossible to say. Its face was hidden all but the nose and eyes by a long and thick black beard.

By the time the creature had reached the water's

edge the boat was some thirty feet away and Bob was rowing for all he was worth.

"It's a good thing he didn't come a minute sooner," Jack declared.

But he spoke too soon. Picking up a rock, the size of a large cocoanut, the creature, with a wide swing of his long arm, threw it at them, or rather toward them. The rock described a high arc and, in spite of Bob's efforts to get the boat out of the way, it struck the bottom between them. It was a heavy stone and the boat was a light one and it went right through leaving a hole the size of a plate. Too astonished to move they sat still as the boat rapidly filled and sank beneath them. The water there was not more than four feet deep and when the boat rested on the bottom they were submerged only to their shoulders.

"Well, I'll be jiggered," Jack gasped as he got to his feet.

Bob glanced toward the shore where the creature was dancing wildly about uttering its weird cries and brandishing its long arms. For several minutes they watched it and their hopes rose as they saw that it was reluctant to enter the water.

"Doesn't seem to want to get its feet wet," Jack suggested.

"But it swam out to the boat the other night," Bob reminded him.

"Maybe it's got a boat somewhere."

"I hope not."

"Look out, he's going to throw another stone," Jack cried a moment later.

This time, however, the creature's aim was not so good and the rock, about the size of a baseball, struck the water some ten feet beyond them.

"Guess that first shot was an accident," Jack said but he changed his mind a moment later when he had to dodge sharply to avoid a third rock which was nearly as large as the first.

For some time the creature stood there on the shore throwing rocks at them and several times they narrowly avoided being struck.

"I say, this is getting a bit tiresome," Jack declared after he had barely escaped a rock nearly as large as his head. "I wonder if he's going to keep it up all the rest of the day."

"It's his move," Bob said grimly.

"But it'll be ours in a few minutes because there comes the Valkyrie," Jack cried joyfully pointing out to sea.

Bob turned his head and saw that what Jack had said was true, and, taking off his coat, he waved it over his head.

"They see us," Jack shouted a moment later as he saw the boat change its direction slightly and come directly toward them.

And now the creature on the shore also saw the approaching boat and with a hoarse cry of rage, it hurled a final rock which landed only a foot from Bob's head, and then turned and ran for the woods.

"And I sure hope that's the last we see of that fellow," Bob declared.

"He's not what you'd call a pleasant playmate," Jack assured him.

The Valkyrie soon hove to and a boat was lowered and, a few minutes later, they were on board once more.

"Where in the name of common sense have you been?" Mr. Lakewood began as they came up the ladder.

"Spiking the enemy's guns," Jack grinned.

"Out there in the water?" his uncle demanded.

"Well, that's another part of the story," Bob broke in.

"We'd about given you up for lost," Captain Ole told them as he led the way to the cabin. "Dinner's been waiting these two hours and Wong's as mad as a wet hen. Now hustle and get some dry duds on and then maybe Wong'll give us something to eat and maybe he won't."

As usual Wong's bark was worse than his bite and while they were eating the boys gave them a full account of their adventures.

"Blamed if I know whether to scold you or to

praise you," their uncle said when the story was told. "You did mighty wrong to take such a risk but, on the other hand, I reckon you may have done a big thing for us, that is, if you've fixed that gun so they can't use it."

"Suppose you call it even and don't do either," Bob grinned.

"Well, maybe I will," Mr. Lakewood chuckled.

"How come they didn't follow you?" Jack asked.

"I guess they didn't have steam up," Captain Ole told him.

"Are we going back there?" Bob asked.

"We sure are," his uncle replied. "I never had anyone scare me away from a place yet and I'm too old to begin now."

By the time the meal was over the Valkyrie was again back at her former anchorage. Smoke was pouring out of the stack of the other boat and it was evident they were getting ready to chase them, as the anchor was raised. But it was lowered again almost as soon as their own and again the two ships rode at anchor only a short distance apart.

"I'd give two cents to know what they're going to do," Mr. Lakewood said as he gazed at the other boat. "By the way, boys, come forward a moment. I've got a little surprise for you."

"Gee, but that's a beauty," Jack cried as his uncle pulled a piece of canvas from an object and disclosed

a large caliber rapid fire gun of the latest model.

"I didn't expect to have to use it," he explained, "and I very much hope we won't have to but I had it down in the hold and, as soon as we were out of sight a while ago, I had it brought up."

"It sure gives us the upper hands of them," Bob declared.

"I'll say it does," Jack agreed.

"Look, they're lowering a boat," Bob said.

The same two men, rowed by a couple of natives, were soon at the companionway and, permission having been granted, they quickly mounted to the deck.

"I have the honor to bring you the papers ordering us to search your boat," the man who had called himself a captain, said stiffly handing a legal appearing paper to Captain Ole.

"Do you think I was born yesterday?" the latter snapped as he handed the paper back after a brief glance at it.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that that paper's a fake."

"On what do you base your charge?" the other demanded.

"Are you so ignorant that you don't know that no paper of that kind is legal unless it bears the seal of the government?" he said with a shrug of his shoulders.

"It—it must have been an oversight."

"Perhaps it was, but that makes no difference. The paper is worthless and I refuse to recognize it."

"Perhaps you will recognize something else."

"That depends on what it is, but let me warn you that we are well armed and won't stand for any funny business," Captain Ole said sternly, looking him squarely in the eye.

With a nod at his companion the man turned without another word and left the ship.

"I wonder if they know their gun's out of commission," Bob said as soon as they were off the boat.

"I doubt it," Jack replied.

"And I hope he didn't suspect what we've got under that canvas," Mr. Lakewood said.

"I don't believe he would the way you've got it covered up, that is unless they were watching when you showed it to us," Bob told him.

"But I was careful to stand so that they would be unable to see it," his uncle assured him.

"Then I don't believe they saw it."

"Do you suppose they'll do anything before night?" Jack asked.

"It's hard to tell what those fellows'll do," Captain Ole assured him.

"Well, I reckon we're a match for them whatever they try," the boy declared.

"Let us hope so." The captain spoke readily

enough but there was a note in his voice which Bob caught and it told him that the man was not as confident as he wished to appear.

It was some two hours later when they noticed signs of activity in the bow of the other boat. Several men were gathered in a group about the gun which Bob had disabled and, with the aid of the glasses, they could see that its condition had just been discovered.

"I'll bet that fake captain's mad," Bob chuckled.

"I'd like to be a little mouse and hear what he's saying," Jack added.

"I reckon he knows now—"

Bob's sentence was cut short by a series of explosions and they could see smoke coming from the barrel of the gun.

"Now what do you know about that?" Jack drawled.

"I'm not so terribly surprised," Bob returned. "It means simply that they had extra parts, that's all."

"Or another gun."

"Of course."

"And you took all that risk for nothing."

"I guess you'll have to scold me now," Bob smiled as his uncle and Captain Ole came toward them having heard the reports.

"It wasn't your fault that they had the parts to replace those you took," Mr. Lakewood assured him.

"What I can't understand is why they want us to know that the gun is all right. You see, they were not shooting at us," Bob said.

"Some men can't help bragging and that's his way of doing it. You see he probably couldn't resist the temptation to let us know that you had failed." Mr. Lakewood explained.

"And I suppose he thinks that gun'll scare us," Jack added.

"There's the wireless," Bob said as Jack finished, "and I think it's our call."

"I'll go," Jack told him as he darted for the wireless room.

He was back in about ten minutes.

"It's that captain fellow," he announced.

"What's he want?" Captain Ole asked.

"He says that if we won't let him search the boat he's going to do it anyway and that he's got forty men on board to back him up."

"What did you tell him?"

"Told him to wait till I asked you and he said he'd give me fifteen minutes."

Captain Ole turned to Mr. Lakewood. "It's up to you," he said.

"What's your judgment?"

"Well, there are three things we can do. We can hide the pearls and let them hunt, or we can hoist anchor and run for it, or we can stay and fight."

"And if you had the say?" Mr. Lakewood smiled.

"Well, I never ran away yet nor did I ever give in to the other fellow when I knew he was wrong," Captain Ole declared grimly.

"I thought that was the way you'd feel about it and I don't mind acknowledging that I feel the same way, but the last proposition is out of the question."

"Why is it?" Both the boys asked the question together.

"Do you think I could ever face your mother or father if I took that chance and one or both of you got shot?"

"But—"

"There's no buts about it. It's one of the first two alternatives."

When he spoke in that tone they knew it was useless to argue and even Captain Ole accepted the decision as final.

"Which'll it be, then?" he asked.

"Do you think they could catch us?"

"I don't know. That boat looks pretty fast."

"Has Mac kept steam up?"

"Yes, I told him to."

"Then we'll give them a race."

"Just as you say." The captain turned and mounted the stairs to the wheel house.

"What will I tell him?" Jack asked in a disappointed tone.

"Don't tell him anything," his uncle ordered. "I know just how you boys feel about it and I'm not saying that I don't feel much the same way but it isn't worth the price we might have to pay. They probably haven't got forty in their crew but they have got a lot more than we have and if it came to a fight someone would be sure to get hurt and I can't risk it," he explained.

The boys knew he was right and told him so.

"We've got enough pearls now to give all hands a tidy sum and if we get away from those fellows without any one getting hurt I'll be satisfied so far's that part of it is concerned. Some day I'll find that rascal Kelley and then there'll be a day of reckoning."

"Mac says he's all ready," Captain Ole cried from the wheel house.

"Then up anchor."

"Right."

Three minutes later the propeller began to revolve and the boat slowly swung around. It was evident that the others had expected such a move for hardly were they in motion before they saw the enemy's anchor come out of the water and, at the same time, clouds of smoke poured from the stack.

"They're not losing much time," Jack declared.

Around the end of the island swept the Valkyrie and soon the other boat was lost to sight but they

knew it would be only a matter of a few minutes before they would see it again.

"There she comes," Bob cried a few moments later.

"And, believe me, she is coming," Jack added.

The Valkyrie was now tearing through the water sending a cloud of spray from her bows and, for a time, it seemed that she was outdistancing her pursuer. But, as the time passed, she seemed to be doing better and for an hour the boys could not see that the distance between them changed perceptibly. By the time another hour had passed it was evident that the other boat was shortening the distance between them.

"It's only a matter of a few hours at this rate," Bob said as they stood in the stern watching the race.

"If we can keep ahead till dark we may be able to lose them," Jack returned.

"If we can, but its quite a while before dark and unless we can get more speed out of this boat they'll be up to us I'm afraid."

"They're gaining."

Mr. Lakewood looked worried as he joined them.

"Are we going as fast as we can?" Bob asked.

"Mac's got on every pound of steam he dare carry."

"Then they must have a wonder," Jack declared.

"They have," his uncle agreed with a shake of his head.

"They're going to catch us before dark."

This time it was Captain Ole who made the prediction and his face was, as Jack afterward declared, a mile long.

"Well, I reckon all we can do is to keep on and hope for the best," Mr. Lakewood sighed.

"And prepare for the worst," Captain Ole added.

Another hour went by and now the pursuer was not more than two miles behind and coming like a race horse, as Jack put it. A glance at his watch told him that it was not quite six thirty and he knew that there would be at least two hours and a half more of daylight and by that time, at the rate she was gaining, they would be overhauled. It looked as though they would have to submit to being searched after all. But would they now be satisfied with that? That was a question which was troubling all of them except probably the members of the crew, some of whom had shown their reluctance at leaving until they had exhausted the oyster bed. Wong summoned them to supper and they made a hurried meal, all being anxious to be out where they could watch the race.

"She's not more'n a mile away," Bob declared when they were again in the stern.

"And coming like all possessed," Jack added. "I

never supposed a boat of that size could make such speed."

Rod by rod and yard by yard the pursuing boat gained on them although the Valkyrie seemed to be fairly flying through the water. It still lacked nearly an hour of sunset and there was no hope of keeping away from them until darkness would give them a chance of escape. Slowly, and yet it seemed rapidly to them, the gap between the two boats was closing and it was now only a matter of a few minutes when they would be abreast.

"What do you think they'll do?" Bob asked his uncle.

"It's hard to tell," he replied.

"But aren't we going to put up a fight?" Jack broke in.

"If we get a ghost of a chance we'll fight all right," Captain Ole assured him.

And now it would have been possible to throw a stone from the deck of the Valkyrie to the other boat. The captain, standing in the bow of the pursuing boat was holding a megaphone to his mouth and was evidently shouting some order to them but, so great was the noise of the water rushing by, they were unable to hear a word. Then, throwing the megaphone to one side he gave an order to a man standing by his side and he, motioning to several natives, who were standing several feet back, moved

toward the machine gun which had already been uncovered.

"They're going to take a shot at us," Captain Ole declared.

"Then we'd better get inside," Mr. Lakewood said.

"But you don't—"

Bob started to say something but the sentence was never finished for, just as the man gave the signal to fire, there came a terrific concussion from the bowels of the larger ship. For the fraction of a second, it seemed to the boys, it quivered as though wondering what it was all about, and then the air seemed filled with flying objects.

"She's exploded," Bob gasped.

It was over almost before they realized what had happened and the Storm, as the name on the bow designated her looked, as Jack afterward declared, as though a hundred tons of dynamite had exploded beneath her deck. In fact her entire superstructure was torn to pieces and, evidently the force of the detonation had been downward as well as upward, for she was settling rapidly by the bow.

Fortunately none of the flying debris had struck the Valkyrie and, as soon as he had realized what had happened, Captain Ole had given the order to stop the boat. But before they could turn and get back to the scene of the disaster the Storm had plunged beneath the waves. There was, however,

much wreckage floating about and, in hopes of saving some of the crew, three of the small boats were lowered. But although they searched for more than an hour, four of the natives were all they could find. None of these were injured and they were taken on board and treated kindly. They could not speak English and nothing of moment was learned from them in regard to those who had employed them.

After a consultation it was decided to go back for more pearls and by ten o'clock they were again at their former anchorage. For three days they raked the sea for oysters getting many more pearls and then the supply suddenly gave out and, after another day, during which only a very few oysters were brought up, it was decided to start for home.

"We've nearly a hundred thousand dollars worth unless I'm very much mistaken," Mr. Lakewood declared after they had counted them.

"What are we going to do with those natives?" Captain Ole asked him.

"Reckon we'll have to go back and leave them on their island," Mr. Lakewood told him. "It won't be so much out of our way at that."

So two days later they were back at the island where their friend Umgubsolongas ruled and, much to their delight, the natives were allowed to land at once. To the disappointment of the boys Mr. Umgubsolongas was away from home and would not

be back for another week. So, after taking on a fresh supply of fuel oil and some provisions the Valkyrie turned her bow homeward.

"The only regret I have is that we didn't learn more about that fellow on the island," Mr. Lakewood declared as they were eating dinner the first day out from the island.

"But I tell you it wasn't a man," Bob insisted.

"And if it was we'd never have got him without someone getting killed," Captain Ole added.

"I guess you're right, both of you, but I shall always be sorry that we couldn't have been sure," Mr. Lakewood sighed.

It was a beautiful day when the Valkyrie sailed in past the Statue of Liberty and, a short time later, docked in the East River. The boys were anxious to reach home and see their folks and had prevailed on their uncle to go with them and make them a long visit. So, after goodbyes had been said, the three hurried ashore and, after tending to some necessary business, they caught the Bar Harbor Express for Maine.

"It was a bully trip," Jack declared as he crawled into his berth.

"And a very profitable one as well," Bob added.

THE END.



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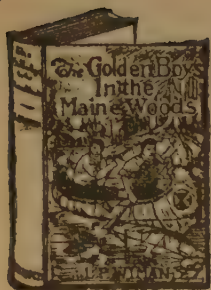
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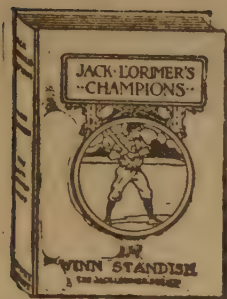
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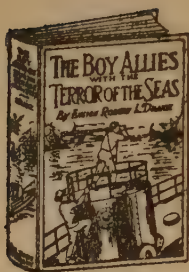
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